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45

No. France Défence

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT.

Subject: France

Navy

571.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM.

SECRET

I.15697

PW/HB

CE 11
Sent 20th April, 1942.
5 a.m.
Received 21st April, 1942.

DECYPHER FROM
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
DOMINION AFFAIRS,
LONDON.

Circular D. No.210.

Following for the Prime Minister.

TURKEY :

My telegram of 18th April D. No.208. The threat to Soviet-Turkish relations caused by exacerbation of feelings over Angora trial has grown.

His Majesty's Ambassador at Kuibyshev has been instructed to impress on Soviet Government the danger of the situation and to urge an immediate stop to press and radio campaign. Meanwhile, His Majesty's Ambassador at Angora has been instructed to impress on Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs necessity for preventing publication of offensive Russian articles in Turkish Press. Trial has been adjourned until April 29th.

FRANCE :

2. My telegram of 18th April, D. No. 208. United States Under Secretary has informed His Majesty's Embassy that on 14th April that the French Admiral at Martinique told the local United States Admiral that he had just been instructed by Darlan to obey only orders from the latter, and to adhere to all assurances hitherto given. United States Admiral was satisfied with this for the present, but precautions had already been taken to prevent French ships escaping and United States Government were prepared to use force if required in Martinique itself.

Copy to War Cabinet,
War Advisory Council,
Defence,
E.A.

21/4/42

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

DEPT. OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

SECRET

CABLEGRAM.

TH

I.1944
CE.55
SENT 18th April, 1942.
2.27 p.m.
RECD.19th April, 1942.

DECYPHER FROM-
The Secretary of State
for Dominion Affairs,
LONDON.

Circular D.208. Following for Prime Minister:

France. 1. We are reminding the United States Government of their responsibility to take precautions against any possible attempt to remove the French warships or gold from Martinique or to provide facilities for Germans in French West Indies and in French Guiana.

F

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM.

SECRET

RECD 11 MAR 1942 EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

AET/TMc.

I.9940
Ce 16/97
Dated - 7th March, 1942.
1455
Recd. - 9th March, 1942.

DECYPHER FROM:

SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS,
LONDON.

Circular D.126. SECRET.

Following for the Prime Minister.

French Empire.

On 27th February the United States Ambassador made oral representations to the Vichy Government against the transfer of the French battle cruiser DUNKERQUE from Oran to Toulon. He emphasized that this constituted a violation of the understanding reached with the Vichy Government on 8th April, 1941 that they would delay departure of this ship "until the conclusions of an agreement on this subject".

Darlan replied that the understanding had been conditional on supply by the United States of foodstuffs to unoccupied France and North Africa and on arrangements being made for the British Navy to be prevented from interfering as to French shipping. The United States, he said had not carried out their side of the bargain and therefore he did not regard the understanding as binding France. He claimed that DUNKERQUE would take approximately two years to repair at Toulon. If she had remained at Oran she would have deteriorated and her value would have been permanently destroyed.

Copy - War Cabinet
War Advisory Council
Defence
E.A.

9/3/42.

The Secretary,
Department of External Affairs.

Referred

Secretary.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

France Navy

CABLEGRAM.

SECRET

I.25681.
Ce.78/265.

DECYPHER FROM -

The Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs,
LONDON.

DATED 28th November, 1941.
9.10 p.m.
RECEIVED 29th November, 1941.

Circular telegram M.397. MOST SECRET.

Following for the Prime Minister -

Admiral D'Harcourt, Commanding French Naval forces at Casablanca, has stated that he has received no orders about surrendering of the French fleet or French Moroccan bases. He thought it most unlikely that the French would now resist the Germans and he would follow Vichy's orders if the latter told him to turn over the bases to the Germans. While expressing a high opinion of the British Navy he stated that as a French Admiral he would act against British aggression and that he expected that the other French Admirals would resist British action against French bases. He did not, however, say that he would resist German aggression against French bases. Mr. Wells stated recently that he thought that Vichy had only not given the fleet and bases because they had not as yet been demanded. So far as he could judge, the Vichy Government was now completely collaborationist.

COPY TO - WAR CABINET
DEFENCE
E. A.

30.11.41.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM. I.3981.

Via Cable 17/36.

DECYPHER FROM

DATED 15th March, 1941.
1.51 p.m.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS,
LONDON.

RECEIVED 16th March, 1941.

MOST SECRET

Circular M. 41.

MOST SECRET.

Following for the Prime Minister -

FRANCE. Owing to risk of incidents with French submarines now based at Konakri, H.M. Ambassador at Madrid has been instructed to remind the French Ambassador of great importance we attach -

(1) to French submarines not being sent to sea without previous notification to British Naval authorities, in order to ensure that they should not be attacked in error for German and Italian submarines which operate extensively off West African coast; and

(2) to the necessity of French submarines navigating on the surface accompanied by a surface vessel.

Copy War Cabinet
E.A.
Defence Co-ord. 16/3/41.

The Secretary,
Department of External Affairs.

Referred.

Secretary.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT. COL. HODGSON.

CABLEGRAM.

MOST SECRET

I. Imperial Cs 20/119.

DECYPHER FROM

SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS,

L O N D O N.

Sent 29th November, 1940
2155
Received 30th November, 1940.

Circular telegram M. 100.

M O S T S E C R E T.

Following for the Prime Minister -

My Circular M. 91, FRANCE --

On 26th November, the United States Secretary of State told His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington that Marshal Petain had given President Roosevelt an undertaking that he would not move the two French battleships without first informing the United States Government.

War Cabinet,
Mr. Shedden. - TELEPRINTED.
Col. Hodgson.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM.

I. 0381.

DECYPHER FROM 2 Via Cable CE 41/15.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS, LONDON.

DATED 26th September, 1940. 6.10 p.m.
RECEIVED 27th September, 1940.

MOST SECRET

Circular D. 489.

MOST SECRET.

Following for the Prime Minister -

YUGOSLAVIA.

His Majesty's Minister at Belgrade has been instructed to inform the Yugoslav Government that we find it difficult to share their lack of anxiety over the arrangements for repatriation of the German colony from Bessarabia, and protest against the arrival in Yugoslavia of uniformed Germans to organize the repatriation.

SPAIN.

2. In reply to an enquiry as regards the possibility of de Gaullist movement taking over the administration in French Morocco the Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs has told His Majesty's Minister at Madrid that provided that there was no encouragement from us or provocation by the French on the Spanish frontier, the Spanish Government might be able to maintain modus vivendi with the de facto French Government.

3. The Minister for Foreign Affairs has again expressed anxiety as regards the result of the check to German on London and the Italian attack attack upon Egypt; he foresees redirection of the German offensive towards the Mediterranean and advocates

(1) de Gaullist activity in Tunisia which by embarrassing Italy might divert the Germans thither and proportionately diminish the German threat to Spain.

(2) Avoidance of any action in Morocco during the next few weeks that would inflame Spanish opinion and facilitate German exploitation of Spanish aspirations.

(3) Announcement by us that we are fully aware of Spanish aspirations and are prepared to take them into account at the peace treaty.

(In this connection he indicates Spanish interest in Morocco and Gibraltar.)

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM.

I.8381.

EGYPT.

4. The Prime Minister has expressed satisfaction with internal developments involving the resignation of Saadists which he claims has strengthened his position and the support of the whole of the Egyptian people. He has obtained unanimous consent of the Cabinet to increase 5,000 men to the Egyptian army in order to prove his determination to act when the time comes.

WEST INDIES.

5. His Majesty's Minister at Washington basing himself on local agreement between United States and French naval authorities has been instructed to urge the United States Government to prevent the French cruiser QUERCY from leaving Fort De France for French Guina.

Copy to - War Cabinet.
Def. Co-Ordn. (TELEPRINTED)
Dept. E.A.
27.9.40.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

SECRET

CABLEGRAM.

I. 6866
CABLE W. 581 CE 39

DECYPHER FROM

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, LONDON.

Dated 17th August, 1940.
4.20 a.m.
Received 17th August, 1940.

CIRCULAR TELEGRAM D. 425

SECRET.

Following for the Prime Minister.

BELGIAN CONGO.

We are sending an economic mission under Lord Hailey to investigate the economic situation in Belgian colonies. The Mission will have the concealed political objective of encouraging the local administration in their present policy of active belligerent alliance with us in the war against Germany and in the defence of Belgian colonies against attack.

ROUMANIA.

2. The Roumanian and Bulgarian Governments are reported to be agreed on southern Dobrudja, though the future Silistria apparently remains in dispute. Hungarian - Roumanian negotiations are expected open on August 17.

WEST INDIES.

3. U.S. Naval authorities have received an assurance from the French Admiral at Martinique that French warships there will not be moved except after prior notice to U. S. Government, who will also be consulted in the event his receiving orders from Vichy to transfer ships to other French possessions for defence purposes. The question of aeroplanes remains unsettled.

GREECE.

4. In addition to sinking the Greek minelaying cruiser, the Italian Government have been developing a press campaign against the Greek Government possibly with the object of inducing them to renounce the Anglo-Greek guarantee, or as a prelude to political demands or even an attack. The Greek President of the Council emphasised that the Greek Government would never renounce the

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM.

guarantee.

SYRIA.

5. The French authorities have offered the release of British crews interned at Beirut in return for supply of petrol. His Majesty's Consul-General at Beirut has been instructed to inform the High Commissioner that we must stand out for the release of ships as well, although we are prepared to authorise release limited amount of petroleum products for immediate Syrian requirements, in order to allow more time for the High Commissioner's representations to the Vichy Government to have effect.

6. His Majesty's Minister at Jedda has been instructed to inform Ibnsaud that we see serious objections to Iraq's proposal for Joint Demarche by the Arab States to Vichy Government in support of the nationalists in Syria.

Copy to War Cabinet
Defence
E.A.
13/8/40.

(Teleprinted to C.O.)

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM.

I. 6501.

DECY HER FROM

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS,
LONDON.

Cable PO 192/41.
DATED 10th August, 1940.
12.25 a.m.
RECEIVED 11th August, 1940.

MOST SECRET

Circular D. 412.

MOST SECRET.

Following for Prime Minister -

WEST INDIES.

1. While agreement is still lacking in regard to French war vessels and aeroplanes in Martinique, United States Government are taking steps to prevent oil reaching ships except the quantity necessary for cars and maintenance.

INDO-CHINA.

2. His Majesty's Ambassador at Tokyo has been instructed to enquire of the Japanese Government as to the truth of the reported Japanese demand regarding the Government of Indo-China and to represent that the importance which we have stated we attach to the maintenance of status quo in the Netherlands East Indies applies equally to Indo-China and other territories in the Far East.

Copy to - War Cabinet.
Dept. Def. Co-Ordn. (teleprinted)
Dept. E. A.
11.8.40.

THE SECRETARY,
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS.

REFERRED.

SECRETARY.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

Y 1 Cable 387 CE 44.

CABLEGRAM. I. 5816

DECYPHER FROM:

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS,
LONDON.

Dated 24th July, 1940
3 a.m.
Received 24th July, 1940

MOST SECRET

Circular D. 370.

M O S T S E C R E T.

Following for the Prime Minister :-

BULGARIA.

My circular D.357. His Majesty's Minister At Sofia has informed the King of the Bulgarians that the recent events in Roumania having released us from our earlier obligation, we can now view with sympathy the Bulgarian claim to Southern Dobrudja and hope that it will be possible for him to establish it. His Majesty's Minister avoided saying anything which could be intercepted as incitement to armed action.

WEST INDIES.

My Circular D. 322. In reply to an enquiry the United States Under Secretary of State has indicated to His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington that no solution has yet been reached as regards disposal of French warships and aircraft in the West Indies and that the United States decision is likely to be delayed till after the Havana Conference.

COPY - War Cabinet.
Defence.
External Affairs.

24.7.40

7

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

France Navy

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM.

I. 5428.

1.7 CE 34

DECYPHER FROM

SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS,

LONDON.

Sent 14th July, 1940,
7.25a.m.

Received 15th July, 194

Circular D. 346, Newfoundland 543.

My telegram Circular D.301, Newfoundland 506, of 1st July.

Following general instructions have now been issued from the Admiralty to the Naval Authorities --

"The exact status of French shipping must remain obscure until Anglo-French political relations are clarified. Pending such clarification you should be guided in your actions by the following main considerations

(a) French merchant ships should be stopped, by force if necessary, from entering -

(1) any port in France

(2) Any port in any French possession in which British ships are being detained.

(b) Subject to compliance with (a)(2) it is desirable to foster friendly relations with any French Colonial possessions whose authorities are sympathetic to our orders and French ships should therefore be allowed to trade to and from ports in such areas. Until the situation is clearer, fast ships which might be used as Armed Merchant Cruisers against us should not be released.

In interpreting these instructions, you have full authority to use your discretion but should consult with British Ambassadors or Colonial Governors with whom you might be in touch.

You will be kept informed of further developments."

Copy sent to War Cabinet.
Dept. Customs - attention.
Navy "
Def. Co-ord., Commerce, E.A.

The Secretary,
Dept. External Affairs.

Referred.

Secretary.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

THIS PAGE IS REPRODUCED FROM A BADLY FADED OR ILLEGIBLE SOURCE.
SCANNING THIS ITEM AT A HIGHER RESOLUTION WILL NOT IMPROVE ITS LEGIBILTY.

France Navy

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

I. 5088.

VIA IMP. 248/CE

CABLEGRAM.

MOST SECRET

DECYPHER FROM --

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS, LONDON.

DATED 12th July, 1940, 9 p.m.
RECEIVED 13th July, 1940.

Circular D. 541.

MOST SECRET AND PERSONAL.

Following for the Prime Ministers.

Following is a summary of the chief reactions to the steps taken by the British against French Navy.

(a) World opinion.

The following countries approve of our action.- United States of America, Greece, Yugoslavia, Turkey and the Argentine. The Spanish Cabinet and about one-third of the Navy admit its necessity. The Spanish press and public strongly condemn it although the latter is impressed.

(b) French Overseas Opinion.

French West Africa. Military and Naval opinion tends to stiffen towards resistance to the British. Our liaison officers have been asked to leave. Unless officers and officials have a leader, they will follow the Petain Government. Generally speaking, even if we do not encount active resistance, we can expect no co-operation.

CASABLANCA. Distinct anti-British feeling although it is hoped that leaflets dropped on night of 9th/10th July may reduce this.

FRENCH EQUATORIAL AFRICA. The attitude favourable and cordial to us. If the Governor leaves the military are likely to take over the Government and ask for our support.

MARTINIQUE. French sailors favour us, but the Governor is for Petain.

(c)

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THIS PAGE IS REPRODUCED FROM A BADLY FADED OR ILLEGIBLE SOURCE.
SCANNING THIS ITEM AT A HIGHER RESOLUTION WILL NOT IMPROVE ITS LEGIBILTY.

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM.

(c) FRENCH NAVAL MORALE IN BRITISH PORTS.

MALTA. Armed. About half of crew of French submarine wish to continue to fight.

ALEXANDRIA. The French have agreed to reduce combat crews to quarter. The remainder are being shipped to Beirut.

PLYMOUTH. Rumours of French Royalist movement which would probably find fruitful grounds in French Navy. All French politicians are discredited and disliked.

PORTSMOUTH. Daily improvement in discipline and morale. The desire for active service. Increasing dislike of the Petain Government.

DUNBAR. (Submarine crew.)

ORAN. Action not discussed. Complete indifference to the Petain Government. Sympathy to De Gaulle and Muselier but anxiety about pay.

The morale and discipline excellent. Willing to serve in Royal Navy.

COPY TO WAR CABINET,
DEPT. DEFENCE CO.
E.A.

18.9.1940.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

France Navy

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

Cable OX 16...

I. 5252.

DECODE OF CABLEGRAM [illegible]

CABLEGRAM.

...d 9th July, 1940.
9.4 p.m.

THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE,
LONDON.

Received 10th July, 1940.

Following for Information from Smart:- weekly commentary. The news of action to prevent French fleet from falling into enemy hands was received by all sections of British opinion with thankfulness combined with sorrowful bewilderment at the sudden change in relations with France. For diplomatic reasons, it is undesirable to focus public attention upon details of formal Anglo-French relations which indeed remain uncertain but following line of publicity is suggested.

Although we are not, of course at war with France it should be emphasised that the French Government is subservient to Hitler, speaking and acting as directed. Several members of the Petain Cabinet are known to have engaged in treacherous intrigues with Mussolini before the Armistice. The prime necessity of winning the war in the interest of France as well as our own, may compel us to take action against German forces on French soil or probably against French forces being used against us. It appears unwise to build upon divergence between French Government and French people since suppression of the truth and elimination of all criticism in France may expected to induce apparently solid French opinion. Popular opposition will have in any case little chance of action at present. Orders for the arrest of leading French journalists of different political opinion including Bertinax, Prouis, is proof of the determination to abolish free speech or thought. Liberation of France nevertheless remains the principal war aim of the British Empire. Large numbers of Frenchmen who are out of the enemy's power have volunteered to serve the British side and the public may be reminded that these Frenchmen together with many who are yet unactive to assist remain our allies.

British public opinion has been half-heartened by the resolute naval action, by the news of our unremitting offensive action against the enmy, and by evidence of preparedness at home.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

-2-

CABLEGRAM.

Enrolment of local defence volunteers and eagerness to take part in trench digging and other defence works typical of the present popular mood. Certain campaign against Ministers, closely identified with the late Government, is to be interpreted less as criticism of the present activity than as a proof of determination of the public to fight for victory and not to compromise. Persistent air raids have had no injurious effects on the morale and have done little damage, civil or military. They are probably to be regarded as mainly reconnaissance and training flights preparatory to larger scale operations. German preparations for attempted invasion appear to be proceeding.

COPY - Defence. TELEPRINTED.
War Cabinet.
Information - attention
External Affairs.
Sir Keith Murdock.

10.7.40

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

French Navy

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

I. 5224.

CABLEGRAM.

Cable W 11 GE 2/17

DECYPHER FROM

SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS,
LONDON.

Sent 9th July, 1940, 3.23 p.m.

Received 10th July, 1940.

IMMEDIATE.

Circular D.325.

FOLLOWING FOR PRIME MINISTER -

As a result of the attack on the French battleship RICHELIEU at Dakar by depth charges laid by a naval motor boat and subsequently by naval aircraft yesterday, the RICHELIEU was reported to have settled by the stern and considered to be disabled. Later reported that RICHELIEU had been moved to shallower water where she is immune from torpedo attack. Shortly after the above operation, French aircraft attacked our ships but no damage has been reported. Our Naval forces off Dakar have now dispersed.

Copy sent to War Cabinet.
Depts. Defence, E.A.

TELEPRINTED.
10/7/40

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM. I.5218.

Dated 9th July, 1940.
7.57 a.m.
Received 9th July, 1940.

DECYPHER FROM:

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS,
LONDON.

Circular telegram D.322. MOST SECRET.

Following for the Prime Minister:

ROUMANIA.

1. The Roumanian Government, doubtless under German direction, are reported to be taking increasing powers of control of oil industry.

BELGIAN-CONGO.

2. The Governor-General has expressed satisfaction with our intention to establish economic solidarity between Belgian Congo and British Empire. He authorised the Congo to be treated economically as a British colony.

WEST INDIES.

3. The principle of a British garrison in Aruba has been accepted by local authorities. French troops are being withdrawn.

4. We have agreed to the United States Government's proposal that the French Government should be invited to order French warships in the West Indies to America for internment and to transfer aeroplanes to us.

COPY - War Cabinet, Defence, External Affairs.

9.7.40

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

France Navy

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT. Cable CS 188/44.

I. 5252.

CABLEGRAM.

DECODE OF CABLEGRAM FROM [illegible] Dated 9th July, 1940.
9.4 p.m.

THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE, LONDON. Received 10th July, 1940.

Following for Information from Smart:- weekly commentary. The news of action to prevent French fleet from falling into enemy hands was received by all sections of British opinion with thankfulness combined with sorrowful bewilderment at the sudden change in relations with France. For diplomatic reasons, it is undesirable to focus public attention upon details of formal Anglo-French relations which indeed remain uncertain but following line of publicity is suggested.

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7

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

- 2 -

CABLEGRAM.

Enrolment of local defence volunteers and eagerness to take part in trench digging and other defence works typical of the present popular mood. Certain campaign against Ministers, closely identified with the late Government, is to be interpreted less as criticism of the present activity than as a proof of determination of the public to fight for victory and not to compromise. Persistent air raids have had no injurious effects on the morale and have done little damage, civil or military. They are probably to be regarded as mainly reconnaissance and training flights preparatory to larger scale operations. German preparations for attempted invasion appear to be proceeding.

COPY - Defence, TELEPRINTED.
War Cabinet.
Information - attention
External Affairs.
Sir Keith Murdoch.

10.7.40

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

France Navy Sfdx AHN

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS.

MOST SECRET

DECYPHER OF TELEGRAM RECEIVED FROM THE HIGH COMMISSIONER, LONDON.

Dated 8th July, 1940. Lodged 10.44 p.m.

No.527. Received 7.30 a.m. 9.7.40.

MOST IMMEDIATE.

MOST SECRET. FOR THE PRIME MINISTER. PERSONAL.

Air action against Richelieu at Dakar this morning but results not yet known.

Ireland. Proposal was put to De Valera for ending of partition in Ireland subject to Eire entering war. De Valera rejected proposal and his counter-proposal of end of partition and neutrality of all Ireland indicates impracticability of negotiations with him.

Considerable anxiety as to threat to Khartoum by Italian forces from Kassala and steps to counter it under consideration including transfer of Australians to Egypt to release forces for the Sudan.

BRUCE.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

French Navy

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

DECYPHER OF TELEGRAM RECEIVED FROM THE HIGH COMMISSIONER, LONDON.

Dated 2nd July, 1940. Lodg ed 10.55 p.m.

No. 503. Recd. 11.00 a.m. - 3/7/40.

FOR THE PRIME MINISTER. MOST SECRET.

French fleet. No change in position (my telegram No. 494) but development probable in the immediate future.

Rumania. Despite rumours of coup d'etat in Rumania, of flight of the King to Berlin to ask for German assistance, of possible action by Hungary and Bulgaria against Rumania, of differences between the U.S.S.R. and the Axis, the position in my view remains as indicated in No. 494.

General expectation here is heavy intensification of air attacks in the next few days. Opinion divided as to whether this will be accompanied by attempt at invasion.

BRUCE.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

France Navy

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM.

I. 5167.

DECYPHER FROM
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS,
LONDON.

DATED 7th July, 1940.
10.42 p.m.
RECEIVED 8th July, 1940.

(Through the U.K. High Commissioner)

Circular T. 177.

Newfoundland No. 523. Southern Rhodesia No. 210.

Following from the Ministry of Information for guidance.

Points in Churchill's speech which might be emphasised again if opportunity arises :-

1. Generous alternatives offered French Fleet
   (a) fight with us
   (b) sail under control to British ports, with repatriated crews
   (c) demilitarise in West Indian or American waters
   (d) scuttling.

There was thus no attempt to force any French officer or sailor to fight for Great Britain or separate himself from France against his will.

2. Statement that whereas M. Reynaud gave his personal assurance that 400 air pilots imprisoned in France, many of whom had been shot down by R.A.F., would be handed over to us, the Bordeaux Government returned them to Germany despite the fact that Germany is acutely short of high grade pilots and with the full knowledge that they "would be used to bomb this country and thus force our airmen to shoot them down for the second time over."

Following passage in the message addressed to Admiral Gensoul at Oran might also be emphaised if necessary :-

"We are determined to fight on to the end and if we win as we think we shall, we shall never forget France was our ally, that our interests are the same as hers, and that our common enemy is Germany. Should we conquer, we solemnly declare that we shall restore the greatness and territory of France. For this purpose we must make sure that the best ships of the French Navy are not used against us by the common foe."

Sent to Dublin for information only.

Copy to - War Cabinet, Dept. Def. (teleprinted)
Dept. E.A., Dept. Information Sir K. Murdock
8.7.40.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM.

I. 5166.

DECYPHER FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS, LONDON.

DATED 7th July, 1940. 5.50 a.m.
RECEIVED 8th July, 1940

(Through the U.K. High Commissioner).

Circular S. 176.

Southern Rhodesia No. 209, Newfoundland No. 522.

Following for guidance in publicity.

1. By its present attitude Petain Government has shown itself to be merely puppet of Germany and its declarations should be treated as those of enemy mouthpiece.

2. Note suppression in France of honourable alternative offer to French Admiral at Oran.

3. Although French Government will doubtless suppress all free institutions, restoration of French freedom remains objective of British aims and is conditional on British victory.

Sent to Dublin for information only.

Copy to - War Cabinet.
Def. Co-Ordn. (teleprinted)
Dept. E.A.
Dept. Information.
Sir. K. Murdoch.
8.7.40.

ø group apparently omitted.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

Royal Navy

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

COPY FROM
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS,
LONDON.

CABLEGRAM.

I. 3088.
DATED 5th July, 1940.
11.30 p.m.
RECEIVED 5th July, 1940.

Circular D. 308.

Following is text of the Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons today -

It is with sincere sorrow that I must now announce to the House the measures which we have felt bound to take in order to prevent the French Fleet from falling into German hands. When two nations are fighting together under long and solemn alliance against a common foe, one of them may be stricken down and overwhelmed and may be forced to ask its ally to release it from its obligations, but the least that could be expected was that the French Government, in abandoning the conflict and leaving its whole weight to fall upon Great Britain and the British Empire, would have been careful not to inflict needless injury upon their faithful comrade in whose final victory the sole chance of French freedom lay and lies. As the House will remember we offered to give full release to the French from their treaty obligations, although these were designed for precisely the case which arose, on one condition, namely, that the French Fleet should be sailed for British harbours before the separate armistice negotiations with the enemy were completed. This was not done but, on the contrary, in spite of every kind of private and personal promise and assurance given by Admiral Darlan to the First Lord and to his naval colleague the First Sea Lord of the British Admiralty, an armistice was signed which was bound to place the French Fleet as effectively in the power of Germany and its Italian follower as a portion of the French Fleet was placed in our power when many of them, being unable to reach African ports, came into the harbours of Portsmouth and Plymouth about 10 days ago. Thus I must place on record that what might have been a mortal injury was done to us by the Bordeaux Government with full knowledge of the consequences and of our dnagers and after rejecting all our appeals at the moment when they were abandoning the alliance and breaking the engagements which fortified it.

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CABLEGRAM.

There was the callous, and perhaps even malevolent, treatment which we received - not indeed from the French nation who had never been and apparently never are to be consulted upon these transactions - but from the Bordeaux Government. This is the instance. There were over 400 German air pilots who were prisoners in France, many of them, perhaps most of them, shot down by the Royal Air Force. I obtained from M. Reynaud a personal promise that these pilots should be sent for safe keeping to England, and orders were given by him to that effect, but when M. Reynaud fell, those pilots were delivered over to Germany, in order, no doubt, to win favour for the Bordeaux Government with their German masters, and to win it without regard to the injury done to us. The German Air Force already feels acutely the shortage of high grade pilots and it seemd to me particularly odious, if I may use the word, that these 400 skilled men should be handed over with the sure knowledge that they would be used to bomb this country and thus force our airmen to shoot them down for the second time over. Such wrongful deeds I am sure will not be condoned by history and I firmly believe that a generation of Frenchmen will arise who will clear their national honour from all countenance of them.

I said last week that we must now look with particular attention to our own salvation. I have never in my experience seen so grim and sombre a question as what we were to do about the French Fleet discussed in the Cabinet and it shows how strong were the reasons for the course which we thought it our duty to take, that every member of the Cabinet had the same convictions about what should be done and there was not the slightest hesitation or divergence among them. The three Service Ministers as well as men like the Minister of Information and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, particularly noted for their long friendship with France, when they were consulted were equally convinced that no other decision than that which we took was possible. We took that decision and it was the decision to which, with aching hearts, but with clear vision, we unitedly came. Accordingly early yesterday morning, 3rd July, after all preparations had been made, we took the greater part of the French Fleet under our

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CABLEGRAM.

control or else called upon them with adequate force to comply with our requirements. Two battleships, two light cruisers, some submarines, including a very large one, the SURCOUF, eight destroyers with approximately 800 smaller but extremely useful minesweeping and anti-submarine craft which lay for the most part at Portsmouth and Plymouth, though there were some at Sheerness, were boarded by superior forces after brief notice had been given wherever possible to their Captains.

This operation was successfully carried out without resistance or bloodshed except in one instance. A scuffle arose, through a misunderstanding, in the submarine SURCOUF, in which one British leading seaman was killed and two British officers and one rating wounded, and one French officer killed and one wounded. For the rest, the French sailors in the main cheerfully accepted the end of a period of uncertainty and a considerable number, 800 or 900, have expressed an ardent desire to continue the war, and some have asked for British nationality. This we are ready to grant without prejudice to the other Frenchmen, numbered by thousands, who prefer to fight on with us as Frenchmen. All the rest of those crews will be immediately repatriated to French ports if the French Government are able to make arrangements for their reception by permission of their German rulers. We are also repatriating all French troops who were in this country excepting those who, of their own free will, have volunteered to follow General de Gaulle in the French Forces of liberation of whom he is Chief. Several French submarines have also joined us independently and we have accepted their services.

Now I turn to the Mediterranean. At Alexandria, where a strong British Battle Fleet is lying, there are besides a French Battleship, four French Cruisers, three of them modern 6 inch gun vessels and a number of smaller ships. These have been informed that they cannot be permitted to leave harbour and thus fall within the power of the German conquerers of France. Negotiations and discussions, with the details of which I need not

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PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM.

trouble the House have been taking place and measures have now been taken to ensure that those ships which are commanded by a very gallant Admiral shall be sunk or otherwise made to comply with our wishes. The anguish which this process has naturally caused to the British and French Naval officers concerned may be readily imagined when I tell the House that only this morning in the air raid upon Alexandria by Italian aircraft, some of the French ships fired heavily and effectively with us against the common enemy. We shall, of course, offer the fullest facilities to all French Officers and men at Alexandria who wish to continue the war and will provide for them and maintain them during the conflict. We have also promised to repatriate all the rest and every care in our power will be taken if they allow it, for their safety and their comfort.

So much for Alexandria. But the most serious part of the story remains. Two of the finest vessels of the French Fleet, The DUNKERQUE and the STRASBOURG, modern battle cruisers, much superior to SCHARNHORST and GNEISENAU and built for the purpose of being superior to them, lay with two battleships, several light cruisers and a number of destroyers and submarines and other vessels at Oran and at its adjacent military port of Mersel-Kebir on the Northern African shore of Morocco. Yesterday morning a carefully chosen British Officer, Captain Holland, lately Naval Attaché in Paris, sent on in a destroyer, waited upon the French Admiral Gensoul. After being refused an interview he presented the following document which I will read to the House. The first two paragraphs of the document deal with the general question of the armistice which I have already explained in my own words. The fourth paragraph begins as follows -- this is the operative paragraph --

"It is impossible for us, your comrades up to now, to allow your fine ships to fall into the power of the German or Italian enemy. We are determined to fight on to the end and if we win, as we think we shall, we shall never forget that

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THIS PAGE IS REPRODUCED FROM A BADLY FADED OR ILLEGIBLE SOURCE.
SCANNING THIS ITEM AT A HIGHER RESOLUTION WILL NOT IMPROVE ITS LEGIBILTY.

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

- 5 -

CABLEGRAM.

France was our Ally, that our interests are the same as hers, and that our common enemy is Germany; should we conquer, we solemnly declare that we shall restore the greatness and territory of France. For this purpose we must make sure that the best ships of the French Navy are not used against us by the common foe. In these circumstances His Majesty's Government have instructed me - that is, the officer delivering the document to the Admiral - to demand that the French Fleet now at Mersel-Kebir and Oran shall act in accordance with one of the following alternatives: (a) sail with us and continue to fight for victory against the German and Italians; (b) Sail with reduced crews under our control to a British port. The reduced crews will be repatriated at the earliest moment. If either of these courses is adopted by you we will restore your ships to France at the conclusion of the war or pay full compensation if they are damaged meanwhile. (c) Alternatively, if you feel bound to stipulate that your ships should not be used against the Germans or Italians unless these break the armistice, then sail then with us with reduced crews to some French port in the West Indies: Martinique for instance, where they can be demilitarised to our satisfaction or be perhaps entrusted to the United States to remain safe until the end of the war, the crews being repatriated. If you refuse these fair offers, I must, with profound regret, require you to sink your ships within six hours. Finally, failing the above, I have the order from His Majesty's Government to use whatever force may be necessary to prevent your ships from falling into German or Italian hands."

We had hoped that one or other of the alternatives which we presented would have been accepted without the necessity of using the terrible force of a British Battle Squadron. Such a Squadron arrived before Oran, two hours after Captain Holland and his destroyer. This Battle Squadron was commanded by Vice-Admiral Somerville, at

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PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM. 6

officer who distinguished himself lately in bringing off over 100,000 Ffenchmen during the evacuation from Dunkirk. Admiral Somerville was further provided besides, his battleships, with a cruiser force and strong flotillas. All day the parleys continued and we hoped until the afternoon that our terms would be accepted without bloodshed. However, no doubt in obedience to the orders dictated by the Germans from Wiesbaden where the Franco-German armistice commission is in session, Admiral Gensoul refused to comply and announced his intention of fighting. Admiral Somerville was therefore ordered to complete his mission before darkness fell and at 5.53 p.m. we opened fire upon this powerful French Fleet which was also protected by its shore batteries. At 6 p.m. he reported that he was heavily engaged. The action lasted for some ten minutes and followed by heavy attacks from our naval aircraft carried in the "Ark Royal". At 7.20 Admiral Somerville forwarded a further report which stated that a battle cruiser of the STRASBOURG class was damaged and ashore and that a battleship of the BRETAGNE class had been sunk, that another of the same class had been heavily damaged, that two French destroyers and a seaplane carrier COMMANDANT TESTE were also sunk or burned. While this melancholy action is being fought, either the battle cruiser STRASBOURG or the DUNKERQUE, one or the other, managed to slip out of harbour in a gallant effort to reach Toulon or a North African port and place herself under German control in accordance with the armistice terms of the Bordeaux Government, though all this her crew and Captain may not have realised She was pursued by aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm and hit by at least one torpedo. She may have been joined by other French vessels from Algiers during the night. Those vessels were well placed to join her and the whole were able to reach Toulon before we could overtake them. The DUNKERQUE will at any rate be out of action for many months to come.

I need hardly say that the French ships were fought

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CABLEGRAM.

albeit in this unnatural cause, with the characteristic courage of the French Navy, and every allowance must be made for Admiral Gensoul and his officers who felt themselves obliged to obey the orders they received from their Government and could not look behind that Government to see German dictation. I fear the loss of life among the French and in the harbour must have been heavy as we were compelled to use a severe measure of force and several immense explosions were heard. None of the British ships taking part in the action was in any way affected in gun power or mobility by the heavy fire directed upon them. I have not yet received any reports of our casualties but Admiral Somerville's Fleet is in all military respects intact and ready for further action. The Italian Navy for whose reception we had also made arrangements, and which is of course considerably stronger numerically than the Fleet we used at Oran, kept prudently out of the way. However, we trust that their turn will come during the operation which we shall pursue to secure the effectual command of the Mediterranean. A large proportion of the French Fleet has therefore passed into our hands or has been put out of action or otherwise withheld from Germany by yesterday's events. The House will not expect me to say anything about other French ships which are at large except this:- That it is our inflexible resolve to do everything that is possible in order to prevent them falling into the German grip. I leave the judgment of our action with confidence to Parliament. I leave it to the nation and I leave it to the United States. I leave it to the world and history.

Now I turn to the immediate future. We must of course, expect to be attacked or even invaded, if that proves to be possible - it has not been proved yet - in our own Island before very long. We are making every preparation in our power to repel the assaults of the enemy whether they be directed upon Great Britain or upon Ireland, which all Irishmen without distinction of creed or party should realise is in imminent danger. These again are matters upon which we have clear views. These preparations are constantly occupying our toil from morn till night and far into the night.

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PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM.

But, although we have clear views, it would not I think, be profitable for us to discuss them in public or, even so far as the Government is concerned, except under very considerable reserve in a private session.

I call upon all subjects of His Majesty and upon our Allies and wellwishers, and they are not a few, all over the world on both sides of the Atlantic to give us their utmost aid. In the fullest harmony with our Dominions we are moving through a period of extreme danger and our splendid hope when every viture of our race will be tested and all that we have and are will be freely staked. It is the supreme hour to which we have been called. I will venture to read to the House a message which I have caused to be sent to all who are serving in positions of importance under the Crown and if the House should view it with sympathy I should be very glad to send a copy of it to every Member for his own use, not that such exhortations are needed. This is the message -

"On what may be the eve of an attempted invasion of battle for our native land the Prime Minister desires to impress upon all persons holding responsible positions in the Government, in the fighting Services or in the Civil Departments, their duty to maintain a spirit of alert and confident energy. While every precaution must be taken that time and means afford there are no grounds for supposing more German troops canbelanded in this country either from the air or across the sea than can be destroyed or captured by the strong forces at present under arms. The Royal Air Force is in excellent order and at the highest strength it has yet attained. The German Navy was never so weak nor the British Army at home so strong as now. The Prime Minister expects all His Majesty's servants in high places to set an example of steadiness and resolution. They should check and rebuke expressions of loose and ill digested opinion in their circles or by their subordinates.

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CABLEGRAM.

They should not hesitate to report or if necessary, remove any officers or officials who are found to be consciously exercising a distrubing or depressing influence and whose talk is calculated to spread alarm and despondency; thus alonewill they be worthy of the fighting men who in the air on the sea and on land have already met the enemy without any sense of being outmatched in martial qualities."

In conclusion I feel we are entitled to the confidence of the House and that they should sincerely and readily believe that we shall not fail in our duty however painful it may be. The action we have already taken should be in itself sufficient to dispose once and for all of the lies and rumours which have been so industriously spread in the United States and elsewhere by German propaganda and which you meet fostered here at home by Fifth Column activities. These lies and rumours have suggested that we have had some intention of entering into negotiations with the German and Italian Governments. All idea of that should be completely swept out of the way by the very drastic and grievous action we have felt ourselves compelled to take. No Sir there is no thought of negotiation. There is no thought here and I say it in this country whose love of peace has been proved so long that there is no thought here of peace. On the contrary we shall prosecute the war with the utmost vigour by all the means that are open to us until the righteous purposes for which we entered upon it have been in all respects fulfilled.

Copy to - All Ministers.
Dept. Def.
Dept. R.A.
5.7.40.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

SECRET

CABLEGRAM.

Via Cable 20 / GS 8 7

1. 4918.

DECYPHER FROM

SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS,
LONDON.

Sent 1st July, 1940
6.8 p.m.
Received 2nd July, 1940.

IMMEDIATE.

Circular D. 301.

S E C R E T.

My Circular D. 2 8 --

Following amending instructions have now been issued from the Admiralty to the Naval authorities:--

You have discretion to allow French ships to sail in any exceptional case where you think it desirable in Allied i nterest, for example ships engaged in trade with neighbouring French possessions, provided that you are satisfied that the particular voyage will be carried out. For your information, by a clause in the Armistice terms the French merchant ships outside France are to be recalled, or, if it is not possible, ordered to neutral ports.

Copy sent to War Cabinet. (Teleprinted)
Customs - for attention.
Defence "
Navy "
Commerce
E.A.

2/7/40

The Secretary,
Department of External Affairs.

Referred.

Secretary

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

I.4846.

DECYPHER FROM **CABLEGRAM.** 29th June, 1940.
3.30 a.m.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS, LONDON.

Received 29th June, 1940.

Circular D.296.

SECRET.

SECRET

Following for the Prime Minister :-

1. French Empire.

(1) North Africa. The will to resist has flickered out except in Morocco where there is still sentiment in favour of continued resistance.

Syria. Military and civil authorities (also the Admiral Commanding the western Mediterranean Fleet) have now decided on a modified form of obedience to Bordeaux Government but the High Commissioner appears anxious to help us as far as possible.

(2) French West Africa. Morale is sound but needs political leadership.

Indo China. While requesting financial and economic assistance the Governor-General has re-affirmed loyalty to us and determination to resist all aggression.

Afghanistan.

2. The Afghan Minister for Foreign Affairs has informed His Majesty's Minister at Kabul that the new Afghan Soviet Trade Agreement is ready for signature which in spite of the Soviet counter-pressure contains no political concessions to the Soviet Government.

Japan.

(3) The French Ambassador at Tokyo fears that the appointment of Admiral Decoux to supersede General Catreau as Governor-General of French Indo-China may precipitate a crisis in the administration of Indo-China affording Japan pretext for intervention on the grounds that a change in the status quo has occurred.

U.S.A.

4. In reply to an enquiry by H.M. Ambassador at Washington the Under-Secretary of State has stated that the United States Fleet

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PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM.

2.

has left Honolulu (for manoeuvres). He has repeated the undertaking to consult us before any decision to move the fleet from the Pacific is taken.

5. By applying the United States neutrality Act of 1917 the President has terminated our negotiations for the purchase of 20 M.T.B's under construction for the U.S Navy, (according to His Majesty's Ambassador application of this Act will make it impossible for any destroyers or other ships belonging to the United States Navy to be sold or delivered to us.

Copy to War Cabinet.
External Affairs.
Defence Co-ord.
29.6.40.

The Secretary,
Department of External Affairs.

Referred.

Secretary.
29.6.40.

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France Navy

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT. 4760.

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CABLEGRAM.

MOST SECRET

DECYPHER FROM

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS,
LONDON.

DATED 26th June, 1940,
10.10 p.m.
RECEIVED 27th June, 1940.

Circular Z. 157.

MOST SECRET AND PERSONAL.

My telegram of 24th June Circular Z.151. Please give the following message to Prime Minister for his most secret and personal information.

1. The following information regarding the French Fleet and the French naval squadron is forwarded in continuation of my message of the 24th June.

2. The following were the dispositions of the main units of the French Fleet yesterday:-

Alexandria: Battleship Lorraine and eight cruisers

Oran: Battleships BRETAGNE, PROVENCE, STRASBURG and DUNKERQUE, and ten cruisers.

Casablanca: Battleship JEAN BART.

Algiers: Five cruisers.

Dakar: Battleship RICHELIEU and one cruiser (Note. The RICHELIEU has subsequently sailed from Dakar).

Sfax: Twelve cruisers.

Cette: Two cruisers.

Toulon: Two cruisers.

Singapore: Two cruisers.

Martinique: One cruiser (EMIL BERTIN).

Ports in the United Kingdom: Battleships COURBET and PARIS and four cruisers.

At sea in the Eastern Mediterranean: One cruiser.

At sea from Halifax for North Africa: One aircraft carrier, two cruisers and one aircraft carrier also at sea.

/ 3.

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PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM.

3. Alexandria. Admiral Godfroy sent a message to Darlan that the French Navy should continue to fight. The British Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean considered that a good proportion of the men would fight if the question of their families in France did not deter them. Godfroy officially requested permission from the British Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean for his squadron to sail to Beirut and appeared relieved when the request was refused.

4. Beirut. Officers await a lead from authoritative and legal French Imperial Government.

5. Oran. British Flag Officer commanding the North Atlantic states that Admiral Gensoul will obey legally constituted French Government while such Government exists. In its absence would assume control and continue the fight, averse from turning the fleet over to British control. Morale good, but officers extremely dejected.

6. Casablanca. Situation reported deteriorating. Senior officers resigned to scuttling or even demilitarising fleet as order by armistice terms. Admiral appears prepared to take orders from French Government only.

7. Algiers. Reliably reported that French fleet will not support Nogues in his professed determination to maintain the integrity of North Africa. French Admiral has ordered British naval liaison officers to leave Algiers.

8. Bizerta. (where there are seven submarines and one destroyer). French Admiral announced that he will obey his Government, but when released from his official position it would be a different matter. He reaffirmed that no ships would be surrendered to the enemy. British

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PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM.

3.

Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean has full confidence in the French Admiral (Sud).

9. Conclusion. Strong lead from newly constituted French Government in French Colonial territory is required in all areas. Senior officers continue to harp on "obedience to orders of legally constituted Government". Junior officers are willing to continue the fight. Crews of ships probably more influenced by threat to their families.

COPY TO WAR CABINET (TELE.)
MR. SHEDDEN
MR. HODGSON

27.6.1940.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM.

MOST SECRET

I. 4656.

DECYPHER FROM

SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS,
LONDON.

Sent 24th June, 1940.
5.20 p.m.
Received 25th June, 1940.

Circular Z. 151.

MOST SECRET and PERSONAL.

Please give the following message to the Prime Minister for his Most Secret and Personal information -

"Two newest" ships referred to in my Circular telegram Z.145 are battleships JEAN BART (80% complete, but not yet armed) and RICHELIEU (98% complete).

Other "two large ships" referred to are battleships PARIS and COURBET, and "smaller ships" with them comprise some destroyers and torpedo boats.

Greater part of remainder of French Fleet is at present in Mediterranean.

Teleprinted to P.M., Melbourne.
Mr.Shedden, Mr. McEwen.
Copy given to G.-Genl. and Col. Hodgson.

25/6/40

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French Navy

NAVAL STRENGTHS OF BRITAIN, FRANCE, ITALY AND GERMANY.

	Britain	France	Italy + Germany
Capital Ships:			
Completed:	14 battle-ships & battle-cruisers	9 battle-ships & battle-cruisers inc. 2 new 35,000 ton battle-ships	6 battle-ships, inc. 2 35,000 ton ships launched this year + 4 ships (2 battle-ships & 2 pocket battle-ships) = 10
Building:	9 due for completion 1940-41, inc. 5 ships of 35,000 tons	2 35,000 ton ships, reported destroyed at Brest	2 further 35,000 ton ships; 2 battle-ships of 35,000 tons should be completed this year
Aircraft Carriers:			
Completed:	5	1	Nil; Nil
Building:	6	2	2
Cruisers:			
Completed:	60	22	23 + 6 = 29
Building:	23	3	12; 7
Destroyers:			
Completed:	165	58	62 + 25 = 87 approx.
Building:	40	23	7; 10
Submarines:			
Completed:	50	78	115 approx. + 30 approx. = 145
Building:			(Heavy building reported during winter).

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France Navy

PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

CABLEGRAM. I. 4631.

SECRE

DECYPHER FROM

SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS,
LONDON.

Sent 24th June, 1940.
6.50 p.m.
Received 25th June, 1940.

IMMEDIATE.

S E C R E T.

Circular D.285, Newfoundland 476.

My Circular D.275, Newfoundland 451-

The following instructions have been issued from the Admiralty to the naval authorities -

"French ships are not to be allowed to sail from any British port. Force should not be used unless an actual attempt to sail is made. If necessary you should explain to the French Masters that in view of the signing of the Armistice by the French Government it is necessary to hold shipping until the situation in French Empire is clarified".

We should be grateful if similar action could be taken by the other British Commonwealth Governments.

Copy sent to War Cabinet.
Defence Co-ordination.
Navy (teleprinted)
Customs, Commerce, A.G's.
E.A.

25/6/40

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

2, WHITEHALL GARDENS,
LONDON, S.W.1.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS.

CONFIDENTIAL

S.5010.

Air Mail 5.2.38.
Due to arrive 19.2.38.

MEMORANDUM TO:-

The Secretary,
Department of External Affairs,
CANBERRA.

FRANCE.
Defence.

Last letter S.4993.

In a press statement on 31st January, M. Bertrand, the new Minister of Marine, said that in studying the naval situation of France and of other maritime Powers, he had been struck by the rapid evolution of world naval policy which, in the last month, had entered upon an entirely new phase. All the calculations which France had made during 1937 had now to be revised. The example of wisdom and moderation shown in the French naval budget for 1938 had not found an echo elsewhere in the world. France could not maintain this retiring attitude without seriously compromising her interests at sea and overseas, and he, M. Bertrand, therefore intended to acquaint the Government with the situation and propose such measures as were appropriate. M. Bertrand added that he found that the navy was excellently organised and that the necessary plans and means for building were available, with the result that once a decision had been taken and the necessary credits placed at the disposal of the navy, France could re-establish without delay her naval situation which was at present threatened. M. Bertrand concluded by stating that while, naturally, he could not give details of his plans, he could say that what he would recommend would be the replacement without further delay of certain obsolete vessels.

2. The "Times" Paris correspondent states that the Ministry of Marine is proposing to ask the President of the Council and the Ministry of Finance for authority to lay down immediately two 35,000 ton battleships to take the place of the obsolete battleships "Courbet" and "Paris", which are only of 25,800 tons. M. Bertrand will also ask for authority for the laying down in each of the two following years of two more battleships of similar tonnage, making six in all. For this purpose M. Bertrand will require an immediate credit of one milliard and a total credit of six milliard to be spent over a period of six years.

COPY TO
DEFENCE DEPT.
22.2.38.

Pending the result of these consultations the meeting of Naval Commission of Chamber has been postponed for one week.

The "Times" correspondent is confident of the accuracy of his information, though he says that the Government may issue a démenti, as Parliamentary sanction of expenditure involved has yet to be obtained.

Alfred Stirling

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

5 DEC. 1935

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

No. 410

Downing Street,

13 November, 1935.

Sir,

With reference to my despatch No.33 of the 21st January, 1935, I have the honour to transmit the accompanying copy of a note from the French Ambassador forwarding, in accordance with the provisions of Section 1(b), Part 3 of Chapter II of the Washington Naval Treaty, the particulars of a battleship not yet named, the construction of which has been decided on.

29th October

2. This despatch is being sent to the Commonwealth of Australia No. 410 and New Zealand No. 359

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient,

humble servant,

J. H. Thomas

COPY (encl.) TO DEFENCE. inf.

10 DEC 1935

THE PRIME MINISTER OF

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

COPIE

DO. No. 410,
13/11/35

(A 9171/5/45)

Ambassade de France en Angleterre,
Londres, le 29 octobre, 1935.

Monsieur le Secrétaire d'Etat,

Conformément au paragraphe B, section 1, partie 3 du Traité de Washington, je suis chargé par mon Gouvernement de porter à la connaissance de Votre Excellence les précisions suivantes relatives au navire de ligne dont la construction vient d'être commencée:

Type du bâtiment..... Navire de ligne

Nom du bâtiment ..... Non encore attribué

Noms des navires de ligne à remplacer:

"COURBET" et "PARIS"

Date de l'autorisation gouvernementale, loi du 30 mars 1935.

Date de mise en cale..... 22 octobre 1935.

Déplacement type estimé.. 35.000 tonnes, 35.560 tonnes métriques.

Longeur à la flottaison.. 242 mètres

Largeur maxima à la flottaison 33 mètres 08.

Tirant d'eau moyen correspondant au déplacement type.... 8 mètres 10.

L'indication du nom des navires à remplacer est donnée pour le cas ou, lors de la mise en service du nouveau bâtiment, les conditions de remplacement et classe prévues par le Traité de Washington demeureraient en vigueur.

Les renseignements qui précèdent ont été également communiqués aux autres Puissances signataires du Traité de 1922./.

Veuillez agréer, etc.,

(Signé) A.C. CORBIN.

Son Excellence Sir Samuel Hoare,
Principal Secrétaire d'Etat de Sa Majesté
Britannique aux Affaires Etrangères.
Foreign Office.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

~~NORTH AMERICA.~~ July 15, 1935.

CONFIDENTIAL. SECTION 2.

[A 6246/22/45]

Sir G. Clerk to Sir Samuel Hoare.—(Received July 15.)

(No. 1005.)

HIS Majesty's representative at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him copy of despatch No. 10 from His Majesty's naval attaché at this Embassy, dated the 11th July, 1935, respecting the effect of the German naval programme on French power at sea.

Paris, July 12, 1935.

Enclosure.

Captain Hammill to Sir G. Clerk.

(No. 10/35.)

Sir, *Paris, July 11, 1935.*

THE publication of the German programme of naval construction on the 9th July makes it possible to form some estimate of the effect of the resurrection of that navy on French power at sea.

2. It is unprofitable to try and strike an exact balance in figures of the relative strengths in each category. A moderate superiority in numbers will not give any fleet freedom of action in enemy waters. It is, however, possible to forecast (or guess at) the situation in a few years' time when Germany possesses a fleet as opposed to "a few ships," which has been the case since 1919.

3. Put as shortly as possible, the effects seem to be:—

(*a*) The continuance of the Franco-Italian *entente* will become increasingly important for France at sea.

(*b*) In the event of war between France and Germany (excluding England), France will not be able to browbeat the German fleet within the area of the North Sea. On the other hand, the German fleet as increased should still be unable to do more than irritate the French in the Atlantic.

(*c*) Whatever may have been the reasons for the French starting the new 35,000-ton battleships, and whatever may have been their hopes of cancelling them, these ships will now have to be constructed (though if directed against Germany they might seem unnecessarily large). The reason for the above is that the new German battleships will completely outclass the renovated *Bretagne* class.

(*d*) The forecast of a German aircraft carrier which will be considerably more efficient than the *Béarn* will probably mean that the French will have to build one, too.

(*e*) The French would oppose the abolition of submarines to the last ditch.

4. With the exception of (*d*), it seems unlikely that France will have to incur additional expenditure on any considerable scale. The fact that it is at least conceivable that M. Piétri may sometime be Minister of Finance should mean that the question of cost will be given due weight, in addition to his known sense of public responsibility. If extra money is required, the way in which he is bringing the navy before the public, as exemplified by the naval review at Brest, should be good propaganda for his needs.

5. The reception of the German programme by the French press is at present rather indefinite, and they seem to be casting about for a lead. There are the numerical comparisons which might be expected, but comment seems to be

COPY TO DEFENCE. inf.

19 SEP 1935

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uninstructed, and to take it for granted that the British Admiralty were unaware at the time of the pact of the German state of preparedness. There is still some dwelling on the enormity of our having condoned a breach of the Versailles Treaty, but so far there is nothing constructive, and only vague speculation that the French navy will need to be strengthened.

6. Apart from the press, I have the impression that responsible naval opinion has drifted to the conclusion that a limited German navy is better than an unlimited one.

I have, &c.
C. F. HAMMILL, *R.N.*,
Naval Attaché.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

12 FEB 1935

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
No. 33

Downing Street,
21 January, 1935.

Sir,

With reference to my despatch No.50 of the 10th February, 1933, I have the honour to transmit the accompanying copy of a note from the French Ambassador forwarding, in accordance with the provisions of Section 1 (b), Part 3 of Chapter II of the Washington Naval Treaty, the particulars of a battleship "Strasbourg", the construction of which has been decided on.

3rd January 1935.

2. This despatch is being sent to the Commonwealth of Australia No. 33 and New Zealand No. 25

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient
humble servant,

J. H. Thomas

Copy Sent to.
... Governor-General.

Copy to DEFENCE
20 FEB 1935

THE PRIME MINISTER OF
THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

Copie.

(F 83/5/45)

3 Janvier, 1935.

Monsieur le Secrétaire d'Etat,

M. le Ministre de la Marine m'a communiqué les caractéristiques du navire de ligne "STRASBOURG" dont la construction a été décidée par le Gouvernement français et qui est destiné à remplacer le navire de ligne "Jean-Bart" dans la marine française.

Ces caractéristiques sont les suivantes:

Nom et type du bâtiment:	"Strasbourg", navire de ligne.
Nom du navire de ligne à remplacer:	"Jean-Bart".
Date de l'autorisation gouvernementale:	Loi du 12 Juillet 1934
Date de mise sur cale:	26 Novembre 1934.
Déplacement-type:	26.500 tonnes 26.924 tonnes métriques.
Longueur à la flottaison:	209 mètres.
Largeur maximum à ou sous la flottaison:	31 m 08.
Tirant d'eau moyen correspondant au déplacement-type:	7 m 65.

J'ai l'honneur de porter ces indications à la connaissance de Votre Excellence en application des dispositions du chapitre 2, partie 3, section 1, paragraphe b du Traité limitant les armements navals signé à Washington le 6 Février 1922.

Veuillez agréer les assurances de la haute considération avec laquelle j'ai l'honneur d'etre.

Monsieur le Secrétaire d'Etat,

de Votre Excellence, etc.

(Signé) Ch. Corbin.

Son Excellence
Sir John Simon,
Principal Secrétaire d'Etat de Sa Majesté
britannique aux Affaires Etrangères,
Foreign Office.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

CONFIDENTIAL

26th November, 1934.

MEMORANDUM FOR:-

The Secretary,
Department of Defence.

Forwarded herewith is a copy of a Foreign Office Print dated 17th September, 1934, No. C 6205/1105/17, relative to a new French naval base at Cam Ranh Bay, French Indo-China.

(sgd) W R Hodgson

(W. R. HODGSON)
Assistant Secretary.

This print refers to a new French base for submarines and commerce, to be constructed at Can Ranh Bay, 118 miles north of Saigon. Rail facilities, etc, to be provided.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

KO/JS

MEMORANDUM FOR:-

The Secretary,
Department of Defence.

With reference to paragraph B, Section I, Part III of the Washington Naval Treaty, I enclose herewith, by direction, for your information, copy of particulars communicated by the French Ambassador in London concerning the battleship "Dunkerque" of which construction has been commenced by the French Government.

KO
Secretary.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

MAR 17 1933

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

No. 50

Downing Street,

10 February, 1933.

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit, for the information of His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia, the accompanying copy of a note from the French Ambassador containing a notification made in accordance with Paragraph b of Section I of Part III of the Washington Naval Treaty, regarding the French warship "Dunkerque" which is under construction.

20th January, 1933.

2. This despatch is being sent to the Commonwealth of Australia No. 50 New Zealand No. 31 and the Union of South Africa No. 38

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient

humble servant,

Passfield

Copy Sent to
His Excellency The Governor-General.

THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

20 MAR 1933

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

Copie.

(A.510/6/45).

Le paragraphe B de la section I de la Partie III du Traité Naval de Washington de 1922 prévoit que les Puissances signataires de ce Traité échangeront certains renseignements relatifs aux navires de ligne et aux navires porte-aéronefs dont elles entreprendront la construction.

En application de ces dispositions, l'Ambassadeur de France a l'honneur, conformément aux instructions de son Gouvernement, de communiquer à Son Excellence le Principal Secrétaire d'Etat de Sa Majesté britannique pour les Affaires Etrangères les renseignements ci-joints qui concernent le navire de ligne "Dunkerque" dont la construction vient d'être commencée par le Gouvernement français.

M. de Fleuriau saisit cette occasion pour renouveler à Son Excellence Sir John Simon les assurances de sa haute considération.

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE A LONDRES,

Albert Gate House,

Le 20 Janvier, 1933.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

Copie.

TRAITE NAVAL DE WASHINGTON 1932.

Renseignements communiqués en application du Paragraphe b de la Section I de la Partie III.

Nom et type du bâtiment:	Navire de ligne "Dunkerque".
Nom du navire de ligne à remplacer:	"France".
Date de l'autorisation gouvernementale donnée pour la construction:	(Lois du 10 Juillet (1931, et du (31 Mars 1932.
Date de mise en chantier:	26 Octobre, 1932.
Date de mise sur cale effective:	28 Décembre, 1932.
Déplacement type:	26.500 tonnes - 26.924 tonnes métriques.
Longueur à la flottaison:	209 mètres.
Largeur maximum à ou sous la flottaison:	31 m 08.
Tirant d'eau moyen correspondant au déplacement-type:	7 m 65.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

C'WEALTH EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DEPT.
Cutting from the TIMES of
15/9/1930

France
Navy

FRENCH NAVAL PLANS

PROTECTION OF OVERSEA POSSESSIONS

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT)

PARIS, SEPT. 14

The *Journal* published yesterday a statement made by M. Dumesnil, the French Minister of Marine, to a representative of that newspaper before his meeting with Mr. Alexander, the First Lord of the Admiralty.

He said it must be remembered that France was the second colonizing nation in the world, coming immediately after Great Britain. France must therefore have at her disposal a sufficient naval force to protect her oversea possessions, in addition to the naval strength necessary for her own defence. That was the thesis which he energetically defended at the London Conference, and the position remained unchanged. He proposed to talk on that subject with Mr. Alexander. His wish was to have a navy equal to any task it could be called upon to perform. With that object in view, administrative expenditure should be reduced wherever possible so that more money could be available for the fleet.

Dealing with the training of naval officers, M. Dumesnil spoke of the importance of seamanship, and the advantages to be derived from experience under sail. He was hoping to obtain in France, or from England or Norway, a merchant sailing ship in which to train about 110 naval cadets in a cruise off the Canary Islands and the Azores. He had decided that cadets passing out of the naval school, who, at present, had no means of applying the knowledge they had gained during a two years' cruise, should be transferred to the First Light Cruiser Division. That division, commanded by Rear-Admiral Descottes-Genon, and composed of the 10,000-ton cruisers Duquesne, Suffren, and Tourville, was about to leave on a three months' cruise in the Atlantic, and would visit the Caribbean Sea, South America, and the West Coast of Africa. On its return the division would take part in the manœuvres of the First Squadron, and would then cruise in the Eastern Mediterranean.

It had been decided to place a Vice-Admiral in command of the French Naval forces in the Far East, instead of a rear-admiral, as the question of prestige was of much importance in a distant station where foreign warships were concentrated. Vice-Admiral Herr had been chosen for the post, and it was possible that France might reinforce her naval strength in those waters.

It had become necessary to reconstitute the French Naval divisions. Two dispatch boats for colonial service, part of the present naval programme, would soon be ready, and would be appointed to their destination. The construction of motor-driven gunboats for river service was also being pushed forward. They would be placed under the command of lieutenants or other young officers, who would thus become accustomed to take command and assume responsibility. "Wherever French interests are involved," M. Dumesnil concluded, "we shall be represented."

Ko

2 OCT 1930

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

Daily Telegraph 26/8/1930 FRANCE

Navy

BIGGER NAVIES IN MEDITERRANEAN

HUGE BUILDING BY FRANCE & ITALY

PLANS FOR OVER 120 NEW WARSHIPS

MARKED ADVANCE ON PREVIOUS TYPES

BY OUR NAVAL CORRESPONDENT

In spite of the recently negotiated understanding between France and Italy, whereby each agrees not to begin work on its 1930 naval programme before the end of the year, there is abundant evidence of the marked activity that prevails in the dockyards of both Powers.

The "Section Technique" of the French Ministry of Marine—corresponding to our Royal Corps of Naval Constructors—probably welcomes the delay, as it will enable the designers to perfect their plans for the new ships. Several of these, I understand, will represent a big advance on all previous types.

The projected 10,000-ton cruiser Algérie is to be a veritable ironclad, in that her vitals will be protected by a 6-in armour belt. She will thus be more strongly protected than any big cruiser which has yet been built under the Washington Treaty rules.

It is proposed to arm her with nine 8-in guns in triple turrets, eight 3-in anti-aircraft guns, and eight torpedo tubes. Four seaplanes will be carried. Top hamper is to be reduced to the absolute minimum to reduce target area and there will be only one funnel.

GAS-PROOF GUN TURRETS

The new flotilla leaders will displace nearly 3,000 tons, and must therefore be rated as scout cruisers. Their speed will approach 40 knots. They will carry five or six 5.5in guns and eight tubes for firing the new high-calibre torpedo of tremendous range and destructive power, which the French Navy has been known to be experimenting with since 1928.

The new submarines will also surpass their predecessors in tonnage, speed, and radius. France, at this moment, has forty-four submarines actually under construction or authorised.

The Paris "Section Technique," I learn, is preparing designs for a new type of cruiser, displacing 6,000 tons, to have a speed of 38 knots. Should this be realised it will create a new record for cruiser speed. It is to mount 6-in guns in turrets specially designed to exclude poison gas.

These ships, which resemble our Leander class, constitute the French reply to Italy's marvellous light cruisers of the "Black Band" group. An Italian naval authority assures me that, on the basis of tank experiments, the "Black Band" ships should develop at least 40 knots, even with their full war equipment on board.

ITALY'S BID FOR PARITY

A survey of current work shows that France now has well over fifty warships under construction, including four cruisers (one a minelayer).

The Italian statistics are even more impressive. There are now on the stocks in Italy no fewer than ten cruisers, aggregating 71,500 tons, and nearly 1,000,000 h.p. Fourteen destroyers and twenty submarines are also in hand.

It will be recalled that the 1930 programme, introduced on the morrow of the London Naval Conference, provides for 29 vessels (one 10,000-ton and two 5,000-ton cruisers, four destroyers, 22 submarines), and Signor Mussolini has given emphatic assurances that all these craft will duly be completed.

In all, therefore, Italy has, building and projected, 73 ships of war, with a total displacement of approximately 160,000 tons. This runs the French programme very close. The figures leave no doubt as to Italy's determination to implement her claim to absolute equality of naval power in the Mediterranean.

Ko

1 OCT 1930

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

Manchester Guardian
30.IX.29.

FRONTIER DEFENCE.

Fortification Plans to be Hurried On.

(From our own Correspondent.)

PARIS, SUNDAY.

The French naval programme for 1930 and the Government's plans for a scheme of frontier fortification to be completed by 1935, were discussed in the Chamber yesterday, and after a short debate on both subjects the necessary expenditure was authorised.

The 1930 "slice" of the total French naval programme will cost 1,267,000,000 francs, and consists of proposed construction amounting to 40,000 tons, distributed as follows:—

One cruiser of 10,000 tons,
Six destroyers,
Six first-class submarines,
One mine-laying submarine,
One surface mine-laying ship,
Two dispatch boats for service in distant parts,
One net-laying ship.

The "Temps" explains that the net-laying ship will be the first of its kind, and is necessary for the protection of ships at anchor against submarines. The importance of mines in modern naval warfare accounts for the two mine-laying vessels. The question of the 10,000-ton cruiser provoked some discussion. One deputy called for the construction of a ship to equal the German Admiral Scheer, but M. Leygues, Minister of Marine, insisted that the present programme exactly corresponded to the needs of France. This will be the seventh 10,000-ton cruiser to be built according to the French programme. Of the previous six cruisers of this class five carried new devices for purposes of self-defence, and the new cruiser will also do so. This improved protection involves a loss of speed and the new cruiser will only reach 32 knots.

The "Temps" argues that the construction of the seven 10,000-ton cruisers is justified, if only by the practice and programmes of other nations. The "Temps" thinks that in the matter of cruisers both the Atlantic and the Mediterranean must be taken into account and that 10,000-ton cruisers alone can outclass both German cruisers of the Leipzic class and the Italian cruisers of 5,400 tons.

Frontier Fortifications.

The Government's proposals for frontier fortifications provoked more criticism. The Government's plans involve an expenditure of 2,900,000,000 francs for fortifications and 400,000,000 francs for anti-aircraft defence. M.

FRANCE
NAVY
12
V6
4.II.30

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

[This Document is the Property of His Britannic Majesty's Government.]

[A 8528/30/45] No. 1.

Mr. R. H. Campbell to Mr. A. Henderson.—(*Received December* 14.)

(No. 1676)

HIS Majesty's representative at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him copy of despatch No. 19 from His Majesty's naval attaché to this Embassy dated the 11th December transmitting translated précis of the Chamber Finance Commission's report on naval estimates for 1930.

Paris, December 12, 1929.

Enclosure 1 in No. 1.

Captain Hallifax to Mr. R. H. Campbell.

(No. 19/29.)

Sir, *Paris, December* 11, 1929.

I HAVE the honour to forward the attached translated précis of M. Dumesnil's report on behalf of the Chamber Finance Commission on the naval estimates for 1930.

2. It appears from the figures quoted by M. Dumesnil and referred to on page 1 of my précis, that the comparison made in paragraph 3 of my despatch of the 20th June, 1929, between the money voted in 1929 and that demanded for 1930 was ill-founded.

3. The history of the various negotiations concerning naval disarmament contained in pages 35–97, together with M. Dumesnil's personal observations on this subject, are of great interest. He gives the impression that France will demand at the forthcoming conference the right to complete the building programme announced in the French Government's Bill No. 897 of the 16th December, 1924. This Bill was never passed, but has been tacitly adopted as the basis of all subsequent building programmes, and its provisions are summarised in M. Dumesnil's table on page 59 of his report.

4. M. Dumesnil emphasises continually his contention that, at the forthcoming naval conference, agreement on principles and methods, and not on figures, must be sought. He fears the failure of the conference if this aim is not adhered to.

I have, &c.

GUY W. HALLIFAX, *Naval Attaché.*

Enclosure 2 in No. 1.

Précis of the Report of the Chamber Finance Commission on the 1930 Naval Estimates.

Naval Attaché's Notes.

IN view of the fact that the financial portions of the budget are translated and summarised at the Admiralty, very brief reference is made to them in this paper, more attention being paid to matters of technical interest and those affecting policy.

4.11.30

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

2. The report is very lengthy and contains much of great interest, in view of the forthcoming naval conference. As no complete index is provided, the following table of contents may be found useful :—

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I.—Comparison of estimates for 1930 with the budget voted for 1929	1–7
II.—Changes in the form in which the estimates are presented this year	8–15
III.—Financial position of new construction already authorised (This portion, which has been fairly fully summarised below, contains on pages 25–28 a damaging criticism of the present construction policy of the Ministry of Marine.)	16–34
IV.—Limitation of naval armaments	35–97
This portion contains what the *rapporteur* admits to be an entirely unofficial and personal contribution to the study of this question. It is sub-divided as follows :—	
Part I.—Up to the Anglo-French Conference (July–October 1925)	35
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(ii.) Liberty of the seas and Anglo-American rivalry	39
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(*b.*) Individual theories	40
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(ii.) The Capper proposition of the 10th February, 1929	49
(iii.) The sixth session of the Preparatory Commission and the Gibson Declaration of the 22nd April, 1929	50
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(*c.*) The attitude of other naval Powers. The question of submarines	62
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Annex I.—Text of the Gibson Declaration, the 22nd April, 1929	92
Annex II.—Text of British invitation to the French Government	95
EXAMINATION OF INDIVIDUAL CHAPTERS OF BUDGET	98–174

Précis.

The *rapporteur* makes the following comparison between the present estimates and the budget as voted for 1929 :—

	Millions of Francs.
Voted for 1929	2,485
Estimates for 1930	2,683
Increase	198

He analyses the increase under different headings and proposes a total reduction of 100 million francs, reducing thereby the increase over the budget voted for 1929 to 98 millions. He points out that this is only a 4 per cent. increase, in comparison with corresponding increases of 10 per cent., 33 per cent. and 26 per cent. in the preceding three years.

Though the 1930 estimates do not include any provision for new construction under the naval programme, yet the *rapporteur* states that it is fair to compare the 1929 budget with the present estimates as they stand, because in the former year

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National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

there was an underestimation of the cost of new construction of about 145 million francs, necessitating supplementary votes to this amount, compared to the 125 millions that will be required for the new construction of 1930.

II (page 8) deals with modifications to the form taken by the estimates, some of which are the result of recommendations made last year by the same *rapporteur*, while others have been introduced by the Ministry of Marine itself.

The *rapporteur* discusses this question at length, and draws attention to the fact that his commission is not in agreement with all these changes, and has modified the form of certain chapters, modifications which it hopes the Chamber will approve.

III (page 16) examines the progress made towards the completion of the building programme, known as the "Statut Naval" of 1924, which is destined to be completed in 1943. After a detailed examination of this programme, with which the *rapporteur* expresses his satisfaction, he points out on page 25 that, as only 120 million francs are estimated by the Ministry of Marine for the 1930 portion of the building programme (details of which are not included in these estimates but are dealt with in a separate Bill (see despatch France No. 18 of the 4th December, 1929), this implies that the new ships to be commenced in 1930 will not be laid down till the latter half of that year. This leads him to plead that the intervening period may be devoted to a reconsideration of the details of the 1930 building programme.

He is informed, he states, that it is to be similar to that of 1929 and will include six more of these flotilla leaders of 2,500–3,000 tons, of which we already have twenty-four in commission or building. "Many people," he says, "are inclined to think that these are hybrid vessels—neither cruisers, destroyers nor flotilla leaders—and which, at all events, of all navies ours is alone in building." He points out that speed is only one quality required in a warship, and that the winning of ephemeral speed records is not sufficient justification for the continued building of this class of vessel.

He draws attention to the fact that, with the approaching disappearance of the 5 ex-German cruisers ("Colmar," "Mulhouse," &c.), France, almost alone of all the leading naval Powers, will have no "light" cruisers. In 1927 Italy laid down 5 of 5,270 tons; Germany is building her "Leipzig" class; Japan has built since 1919 14 cruisers of 5,200 tons; and Great Britain, who already possesses 37 cruisers of 4,000–5,000 tons, proposes to lay down 7 more.

The *rapporteur* invites the Chamber to consider whether it would not be better to replace the projected leaders by cruisers of 5,000–6,000 tons.

In claiming that the following two points regarding new construction are universally admitted to-day, he indicates that not everyone is satisfied with the French naval constructors' modern work :—

1. The necessity for stronger ships at the expense of speed ("seductive and deceitful"), for fewer complications caused by the wish to "concentrate in new ships an infinity of the latest apparatus, *some of which may never be used in practice*." If the navy has obtained, for example, excellent boilers, the vitally important propelling and auxiliary machinery on the contrary is not so satisfactory and should be strengthened, and be more conveniently placed in the various compartments so as to render access to it more easy.
2. The necessity for closer co-operation between gun-constructors and ship designers. All the efforts of the ordnance experts should be devoted to the production of three or four perfect types of guns, instead of being spread over the design of dozens of models, none of which give complete satisfaction.

The *rapporteur* expresses regretful admiration of German genius, which he assumes has solved all the difficulties of the triple turret, since both the new 6,000 and 10,000-ton German ships are to have this type of mounting. Necessity is the mother of invention, and German genius has responded to the spur given it by the numerical limitation of her fleet. Without attempting to foresee the result of the forthcoming naval conference, some form of numerical limitation of French light craft is a possibility of the near future, and such limitation will necessitate each unit being perfect of its kind.

The *rapporteur* is therefore happy to note the approaching completion of the new building to house the Naval Construction Branch, which should be finished in

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1930. He hopes that it will assist in producing the improved results looked for from this branch.

On page 29 appears an interesting table showing the state of completion, on the 1st November, 1929, of the ships comprised in the naval programme, each yearly portion being treated under the following headings: "In commission," "On trial," "Completing afloat," "Building," "Not yet laid down."

The *rapporteur* examines on page 30 the position with regard to coast-defence submarines, which, it will be remembered, do not figure in the "Statut naval," but are always treated separately. He discloses that, since the publication of the estimates in April 1929, the Minister has decided to build one of the four vessels of this type at Cherbourg, the other three being ordered from private firms. This has necessitated a transfer of 1,500,000 fr. from Chapter E of the estimates ("New construction by private yards") to Chapter D ("New construction by arsenals").

On page 33, in discussing the construction programme of small craft additional to the naval programme, the intention is shown of using Diesel motors in light surface craft, though no details are given.

The *rapporteur* next (page 35) comes to his examination of the problem of the Limitation of Naval Armaments. This he treats at great length and prefaces as follows:—

> "The study which follows has no official character. It is only a personal study of numerous public documents dealing with the limitation of naval armaments. Similarly, any opinions expressed are merely those of an attentive observer, who attempts no more than to summarise existing facts as clearly as possible, and has no other aim than to see the peaceful efforts of the great naval Powers arrive at an equitable agreement."

The *rapporteur* states that in his report on the 1929 estimates he traced the broad lines of the history of the limitation of naval armaments up to the failure of the Franco-British compromise. Before examining the progress of this question during the present year he proposes to give a brief résumé of the past history. It has not been considered necessary to translate this résumé, which is to be found on pages 35–46 of the report.

It is sufficient to note that M. Dumesnil reviews successively the steps taken towards naval disarmament, commencing with article 8 of the Covenant of the League of Nations and continuing with the Geneva Protocol, and the formation and work of the Preparatory Commission of the League. He reviews also the principal conversations and conferences that have taken place—the Washington Conference, the various sessions of the Preparatory Commission, the Three-Power Conference at Geneva in 1927 and the Franco-British compromise.

M. Dumesnil expresses certain opinions in the course of these reviews to which his position gives a certain value. He continually emphasises the fact that any preliminary agreement between certain Powers, and the proposals of the Preparatory Commission itself, must deal only with principles—"the translation of these principles into figures" being the duty of an eventual International Conference. The Three-Power Conference of 1927 failed because it attempted to deal with figures instead of principles.

M. Dumesnil remarks that, since the naval problem seems easiest to solve (naval strength being based on tangible material factors), it is certainly logical to tackle this side of the question first. But, supposing the five principal naval Powers reach agreement, this will have only small value if it cannot be extended to the secondary naval Powers.

A lesson is to be learnt from the recent construction by Germany of an armoured cruiser, which, though built under the limits imposed by the Treaty of Versailles, largely renders vain the Washington Agreement. An agreement, therefore, reached without the inclusion of Spain, of the South American navies, of Russia and of the small Mediterranean navies would run the risk of further surprises.

Such agreement, therefore, must only be a preface to the action of the Preparatory Commission and of the general International Conference.

In examining the situation since the failure of the Franco-British compromise, M. Dumesnil refers first to the Kellogg Pact. This, he says, has an important bearing on the question of naval disarmament, since Great Britain and the United States of America have made it the basis of their recent conversations. He proceeds to investigate the relations between the Kellogg Pact and naval disarmament. If the pact completely obviated the possibility of war, no naval armaments other than those

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necessary to enforce respect for the pact would be required. But, not only does the pact allow of wars of self-defence, but it provides no sanctions against an aggressor whom it fails to define. Further, both the United States of America and Great Britain have, without attaching formal reserves to their adhesion to the pact, reserved their freedom of action as regards wars in certain quarters of the world.

He points out that, since the United States of America refuse to recognise that the pact obliges them to employ sanctions of any kind, they would remain perfectly free to supply food-stuffs to an aggressor and would therefore be neutrals in the old sense. The problem of the liberty of the seas would therefore remain unsolved. It will, however, he thinks, be very difficult for the United States of America to refuse to employ at any rate economic sanctions against an aggressor, and, if this proves to be the case, the question of the liberty of the seas would no longer have the same importance. This possibility, therefore, establishes the importance of the pact *vis-à-vis* naval disarmament.

Having completed his review of the past, M. Dumesnil proceeds (page 47) to refer to the new factors that have arisen in the past year and mentions the American Cruiser Bill of the 13th February, with the clause inserted on Senator Borah's initiative, the Capper proposal, the Sixth Session of the Preparatory Commission with Mr. Gibson's acceptance of the French proposal of April 1927 as a basis for discussion, and the Anglo-American conversations.

There appears to be no necessity to summarise this historical survey, but it may be useful to draw attention to M. Dumesnil's comments on certain points. At the end of his examination of the American Cruiser Bill he says :—

> "However, ideas are changing in Great Britain; the memory of the situation produced by the German submarine blockade, the changes in the international situation produced by the Covenant and the Kellogg Pact, as the result of which the question of neutrality appears in a different light, have led certain people to consider that blockade is perhaps a more dangerous weapon for her —Great Britain—than for others, and its abolition would remove all rivalry with the United States of America. If, on the other hand, Great Britain could achieve the abolition of submarines, she would have little to fear. The two Anglo-Saxon Powers, having no differences, possessing the uncontested supremacy of the seas, would automatically become the sole arbiters of the peace of the world."

In commenting on the Capper resolution, M. Dumesnil remarks that, though not accepted by the Senate, it may yet be presented again. Its adoption would, in conjunction with the Covenant, abolish at the same time the status of neutrality and Anglo-American rivalry, and the question of naval armaments would then be reduced to one of security. This proposal, he thinks, shows a change of opinion in the United States of America.

There is only one comment by M. Dumesnil worth noting in his account of the Sixth Session of the Preparatory Commission and of the Anglo-German conversations. He gives on pages 59 and 60 tables showing what he considers the composition of the fleets of the United States of America, Great Britain, Japan and France would be in 1936 if the Anglo-American agreements are put into force, if France continues to build in accordance with her existing programme, and if Japan builds up to 70 per cent. of the American strength in light craft. To construct these tables he assumes that the United States of America and Great Britain have agreed to parity at the level of 150,000 tons of destroyers. He remarks, finally, that these allocations of tonnage appear reasonable—"one is justified in saying that the needs of France are at least equal to those of Japan."

M. Dumesnil next discusses the forthcoming naval conference. He examines two questions :—

(i.) Whether principles or tonnage figures are to form the basis of discussion.
(ii.) Whether France ought to attend the conference.

He fears that an *impasse* will be reached if Great Britain and the United States of America try to impose on the other participants tonnage figures based on those to which these two nations have mutually agreed. The needs of other countries do not depend on those of Great Britain and the United States of America. They have their own responsibilities, depending upon their geographical and political situations.

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It will certainly be difficult, M. Dumesnil thinks, to leave tonnage figures entirely out of the question, but the final results of the conference must be expressed in terms of principles and methods.

As regards the question of whether France should attend the conference, M. Dumesnil concludes that she should, but that she must jealously uphold her present naval programme, submarines included, and avoid the danger of the failure of the conference being laid to her charge.

M. Dumesnil then examines the reaction of the other invited Powers, as expressed in their press, towards the Anglo-American agreement. As regards France, he says that the Government has not published its point of view, but, in his opinion, which is that oft repeated of the competent Commissions of the Chambers, France, who established her building programme strictly with a view to her security and to that of her colonial empire, cannot accept any limitation that would involve a reduction of this programme or that strikes at her sovereign right of appreciation.

As regards submarines, their abolition would give the hegemony of the seas to the United States of America and Great Britain, and neither France, Italy nor Japan desire to leave it to an Anglo-Saxon *entente* to guard their interests or to police, for them, the seas. Thus, these three nations, and France in particular, cannot in any case allow themselves to be deprived of this arm, as essential to them as capital ships and cruisers are to Great Britain and the United States of America. France would be equally justified in demanding the abolition of capital ships because she considers them less necessary to her protection than submarines.

Page 64 contains an interesting table showing the position as regards submarine tonnage of the five Powers, as proposed and amended at Washington, as planned in the French building programme, and as at present existing.

M. Dumesnil next turns his attention to the situation arising out of the appearance of the new German "armoured cruiser." After describing her features, and expressing the opinion that she outclasses the 10,000-ton cruiser and has not much to fear from the "Queen Elizabeths," because of her speed, he remarks that it will be necessary either to reach an agreement with Germany—a first modification of the Treaty of Versailles—and invite her to the conference, or revise the Washington Treaty, particularly with regard to the 8-inch-gun limit. At any rate, he considers that this question must be examined at the Five-Power Conference.

Any Power, non-signatory of the Washington Treaty, can build a similar vessel, or provide fresh surprises for the great naval Powers. Has not Spain thought of so doing ?

M. Dumesnil concludes this subject by saying that the construction of this German ship not only necessitates revision of the Washington Treaty, but emphasises the necessity of extending any agreement reached in London to all the secondary naval Powers. It is, he says (reverting to his favourite motif), for the Preparatory Commission and the International Conference at Geneva to effect this.

Under the heading "The Abolition of Submarines" on page 70, M. Dumesnil reiterates his opposition to this proposal, but admits that discussion might take place on the limitation of their unitary or global tonnage.

He proceeds to examine the replies of France, Italy and Japan to the British Government's invitation to the conference. He remarks that Japan does not in her reply refer to the Preparatory Commission or to the International Conference for Disarmament. Certain English papers, he says, deduce from this silence that Japan shares the views of Great Britain and the United States of America as to the desirability of acting on any decisions reached in London independently of these two organs. "If," he continues, "that is the view of the United States of America and Great Britain, it is in direct contradiction to the terms of the last paragraph of the invitation to the conference." Neither France nor Italy could agree to such action.

M. Dumesnil then discusses the position between France and Italy. They are agreed upon several important points, he says, but the difficulty between them is that of parity. He sketches the basis of the Italian claim, repeats the usual arguments to refute it and says it is impossible that Italy should not recognise France's greater needs. The latter's naval programme was established without reference to Italian strength, and at a date previous to the commencement of Italy's present régime, and also prior to the active recommencement of construction by that country. The two latter facts should fully show that in no way is the French building programme aimed against Italy. "It is the result of a purely objective study of our needs at sea, without any possible adversary being considered." France has no intention to-day of enlarging her programme, but neither can she reduce it.

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Battleships.
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are included).
Aircraft carriers.
Cruisers, in two classes—
(*a.*) From 7,000–10
(*b.*) From 3,000–7,0
Destroyers of from 1,85
Torpedo-boats of from 6
Submarines are classed

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On page 90 he gives a tabular
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In the third part of this portion of the report M. Dumesnil gives the situation of the fleets of the five great naval Powers, together with those of Spain and Germany.

Table I gives the number and total tonnage of ships in commission or under construction on the 1st January, 1930, the ships being divided into the following categories :—

Battleships.
Armoured cruisers (in this the British battle cruisers and the new German ship are included).
Aircraft carriers.
Cruisers, in two classes—

(*a.*) From 7,000–10,000 tons.
(*b.*) From 3,000–7,000 tons.

Destroyers of from 1,850–3,000 tons.
Torpedo-boats of from 600–1,850 tons.
Submarines are classed as under and above 630 tons.

He explains that he only includes ships in this table of which the oldest were *launched* in the following years :—

1908 for battleships and aircraft carriers.
1911 for cruisers.
1913 for torpedo boats (he refers to torpedo craft generally).
1916 for submarines.

He points out, however, that this table necessarily includes a certain number of ships with little fighting value, as well as those destined to replace them but not yet completed.

Table I does not, therefore, give an exact picture of the situation.

In consequence *Table II* has been prepared to show this more accurately by leaving out the older ships. He takes the following arbitrary basis for this table :—

1. All British, American and Japanese battleships retain their fighting value. For France, only the three " Provences " and the three " Paris," and for Italy, only the two " Cavours " and the two " Dorias " retain a certain value.
2. All aircraft carriers are included.
3. All the cruisers in the 7,000–10,000-ton class of Table I are new, except two British ships dating from 1917–18, " which are, however, excellent ships."
4. In the 3,000–7,000-ton class of cruisers, 1916 is taken as the limit for date of launching, and 1918 is taken as that for torpedo craft and submarines.

An important note is at the foot of page 75; it gives the basis on which the displacements quoted in these tables are calculated.

Table III gives for the same countries the number and tonnage of ships of each class laid down annually since 1922.

On page 86 a table is given showing the new construction voted or projected for each of the same countries.

On page 87 M. Dumesnil offers certain observations on these tables, of which the following perhaps merit translation :—

The 10,000-ton cruiser is not universally approved. It certainly has high speed and powerful armament, but its protection against all forms of attack is practically nil. As a gun-platform it is not too solid.

Great Britain alone has laid down, since 1926, two cruisers of 8,400 tons, armed with six 8-inch guns instead of eight. They are no more protected than the bigger ships, and their purpose is not evident.

He remarks that both the French 2,500-ton destroyers and the Italian 2,000-ton " esplorati " are in reality cruisers, well armed with torpedoes and yet too big to carry out the duties of torpedo boats.

M. Dumesnil suggests again that France might be well advised to substitute for her 2,500-ton destroyers, cruisers of from 5,000 to 6,000 tons.

On page 90 he gives a tabular statement of submarine construction, concluding by showing that France has built—

138,000 tons less than Great Britain,
37,000 tons less than Japan, and
71,500 tons *more* than Italy.

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This excess over Italy is explained, he says, by the "Beare" and by submarine construction, the tonnage of light surface craft of the two countries being approximately the same, which he demonstrates by his final table on page 91.

Examination of Individual Chapters of Estimates.

(*Naval Attaché's Note.*—No attempt has been made to translate the whole of this portion of the report. The following extracts, which are considered of interest, have, however, been made.)

Chapter 1.

Mention is made in this chapter of a new Technical and Administrative Service at the Ministry of Marine for embarked aviation. No details are yet available.

Chapter 12.

A table on page 112 shows the big decrease in recent years in the numbers of men drafted into the navy by means of the conscription system. This is due to the increased numbers of voluntary engagements.

An at any rate temporary increase in the number of conscripts is, however, to be expected owing to the new regulations which require the "Inscrits Maritimes" to serve for only thirty-four instead of thirty-six months.

(*Naval Attaché's Note.*—It has been reduced to thirty-three months since the date of this report.)

The *rapporteur* points out that one effect of the reduction of conscripts' service to one year is that the "Inscrits Maritimes" will be more costly. When the conscripts served for eighteen months and the "Inscrits Maritimes" for thirty-six, the latter received for the first eighteen months of their service the same pay as the conscripts; during the last eighteen months they received about four times as much. With the reduction of the period of compulsory service to twelve months, and that of the "Inscrits Maritimes" to thirty-four, the latter will now receive the higher rate of pay for twenty-two months instead of eighteen.

The number of voluntary engagements continues to grow steadily, though the rate of increase is now showing signs of slowing down. A table on page 115 shows the division of the personnel of the navy amongst the several classes: conscripts, "Inscrits Maritimes," voluntary engagements, re-engagements and natives for the past eighteen months.

The *rapporteur* draws attention to the serious effect that the reduction of the period of compulsory service will have on the efficiency of the personnel, and argues that all possible steps must be taken to encourage voluntary engagements.

From the table quoted above it is seen that, out of 57,500 men serving on the 1st June, 1929, 36,200 were on engagements (*i.e.*, volunteers for short or long periods).

Chapter 16.

The *rapporteur* complains of the fact that the Accountant Branch is responsible not only for the purchase but also for the storage of fuel. This work should be divided between the Accountant Branch, who would deal with tenders, purchase, &c., and the Engineering Branch, who would be responsible for the safe storage of fuel stocks.

He tells a story of the loss at Oran in March 1929 of gas oil to the value of 300,000 fr., which he attributed to the fault of the paymaster in charge of the oil-fuel depot. (It is amusing reading (page 121), but far too long to translate here.)

Chapter 20.

Tables on pages 128 and 129 show yearly figures of fuel consumption, since 1926 for coal and 1924 for oil fuel. The great increase in oil-fuel consumption in recent years is not balanced by a corresponding decrease in that of coal, and is an indication of the growing size of the French fleet.

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Chapter B (page 155 : This is chapter 46 of the estimates as originally presented).

This chapter deals with war stocks of fuel and the provision of oil reservoirs. The following figures are given :—

1. Oil fuel reservoirs—	Tons.
Completed and filled on the 1st January, 1929 ...	206,377
To be completed in 1929—	
Toulon, five of 9,500 tons each	47,500
Bizerta, one of 10,000 tons	10,000
To be completed in 1930—	
Toulon, four of 9,500 tons each	38,000
Bizerta	30,000
Brest	24,000
Casablanca	37,000

NOTE.—This will give a total oil-fuel capacity by the end of 1930 of 392,877 tons out of the desired total, mentioned by the *rapporteur*, of 1,139,000 tons.)

2. Gas oil reservoirs—	Tons.
Completed and filled on the 1st January, 1929 ...	30,969
To be completed in 1929—	
Toulon, three of 4,000 tons each	12,000
Dakar	2,000
To be completed in 1930—	
Toulon	2,000
Maison Blanche (not certain)	6,000
Saigon	2,000

A table on page 158 shows the sums expended on the construction of oil-fuel reservoirs since 1925.

Chapter G (page 164 : This is chapter 51 of the estimates as originally presented).

The *rapporteur* points out that in previous budgets certain sums were voted for the reorganisation of the ports of Brest and Toulon; but these were only for preliminary works, which were, in any case, necessary independently of the projected reorganisation of the ports. This reorganisation, however (*e.g.*, the transfer of the building yard from Brest to Lannion), has not yet been approved by Parliament and is still anxiously awaited.

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C'WEALTH EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DEPT.
Cutting from the TIMES of
20-12-1929

FRANCE
NAVY

FRENCH NAVAL ESTIMATES

AN EXPENDITURE OF £21,000,000

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT)

PARIS, Dec. 19

The Chamber began the discussion of the Naval Estimates for 1930 this afternoon. The debate was opened by M. Dumesnil, the *rapporteur*, who said that France, because of the extent of her oversea territories, their scattered position, and their distance from the mother country, was entitled to larger naval forces than she at present possessed. Even if her present programme were carried out, the naval strength of France in 1936 would be much less than that of Great Britain, the United States, or Japan.

M. Dumesnil was followed by M. Paul-Boncour, who said that the best chance of agreed naval and military disarmament had been missed at Geneva in 1927. He laid the responsibility for the failure of the French proposals for "global" limitation on Great Britain, and, after referring to the failure of the Anglo-French Naval Compromise last year, regretted the prospect of preliminary Anglo-American agreement, and said that bilateral agreements would never give as good results as general negotiations. Parity, as understood by Great Britain and the United States, would mean an increase of naval armaments. It was opposed to the French view, which maintained that all armaments must be dealt with together. M. Paul-Boncour was frequently cheered.

The estimates propose a total expenditure of 2,683 million francs [£21,464,000], an increase of 198 million francs [£1,584,000] over last year's estimates. The increase is made up of 113 million francs for maintenance, including the subsidy to the Air Ministry, and 85 million francs for new expenditure. The Naval Committee of the Chamber proposes a reduction of 100 million francs, which will bring the total down to 2,583 millions. The contemporary expenditure of Japan will be £22,160,000 and of Italy £13,544,000. It is 570 million francs less than the estimates of 1914.

On November 1 last the state of the French building programme, begun in 1922, was as follows :—

	In service	On trials	Being completed	Laid down
10,000-ton cruisers	2	2	1	1
8,000-ton cruisers	3	—	—	—
Aircraft-carriers ..	1	—	—	—
Destroyers ..	27	8	2	7
Submarines ..	11	4	8	14

TOTAL TONNAGE

The total fighting tonnage of the French Navy, in service or under construction, on January 1, 1930, will be 527,780. It will include nine battleships, one aircraft-carrier, nine large cruisers (10,000 or 8,000 tons), three smaller cruisers (ex-German), 78 destroyers and torpedo-boats, 55 ocean-going submarines, and 33 coastal submarines. Three of the battleships, the three ex-German cruisers, about 30 torpedo craft, and a few submarines are obsolescent. The total tonnage aimed at (excluding capital ships, aircraft-carriers, and fleet oilers) is 588,000 tons, producing a grand total of about 800,000 tons.

The 1930 programme will not be put in hand before next April, and the *rapporteur* recommended that the interval should be used for a careful reconsideration of the types of ships which the Ministry proposes to build. The building of large, fast cruisers in France has run ahead of their equipment, especially in gunnery instruments, and the French destroyers, although they outclass those of other powers, are themselves outclassed by their small cruisers, while the French fleet is left without economical light craft to cope with submarines.

Any limitation of light forces which may result from the London Naval Conference will make it more than ever desirable that no construction should be wasted, and that preliminary research, rather than trial and error, should be the rule. The *rapporteur* has therefore called for closer co-ordination between the making of guns and their installation, and has expressed the hope that, by concentrating on three or four standard weapons, the ordnance services will be able to increase the fighting value of the fleet.

The total effective *personnel* of the French Navy in 1930 is estimated at 58,500, which is 1,000 more than last year, and includes 500 attached to the Air Ministry. The reduction of compulsory service to one year, which applies to the Navy as well as the Army, threatens the Navy with a loss of efficiency, since only during the last six months of the former 18-month period could naval conscripts be regarded as returning value for their training. At the same time, the minimum period of service for the professional sailors has been reduced from 36 to 34 months, which means larger drafts on the conscripts.

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DAILY TELEGRAPH 2.11.1929

FRANCE 17

NAVY

A DREADNOUGHT OF THE UNDERSEAS.

SEAPLANE IN GIANT SUBMARINE.

FRENCH BREAK ALL RECORDS.

BY "THE DAILY TELEGRAPH" NAVAL CORRESPONDENT.

All existing records of submarine dimensions and fighting power will be broken by the French vessel Surcouf, which is to be launched at Cherbourg on Nov. 18.

Officially designated a "sousmarin de croisière," she is indeed a submersible light cruiser, and by a very considerable margin the largest underwater craft which has been built for any navy up to the present.

Details now released show Surcouf to be a much more imposing vessel than had been anticipated. The British X 1 and the American V 4, hitherto the largest submarines afloat, are completely eclipsed.

Two years of intense study and tank experiments were necessary before Surcouf's plans were finally approved. They have resulted in an undersea Dreadnought of 4,304 tons, this being the displacement when in diving trim. On the surface she will displace 3,257 tons.

As the figures have been calculated on the Washington Treaty "standard" scale, which omits fuel and certain other items, the actual weight of Surcouf will be appreciably greater than these tonnage totals indicate.

13,000-MILE RANGE.

Her length is nearly 400ft, and the depth from keel to upperworks is no less than 42½ft, so that she will have a freeboard as high as that of a destroyer. On the surface she is driven by Diesel engines at a speed of 18 to 19 knots, and below water by electro-motors at 10 knots. Sufficient fuel will be carried for a non-stop voyage of 13,000 miles at a constant speed of 12 knots. She could therefore travel half-way round the globe without calling at any intermediate port.

The hull is of such massive construction that the vessel will, it is claimed, be able to reach a depth of at least 427ft with absolute safety, although this is 80ft deeper than any submarine has descended up to the present date. To work this giant submersible a crew of 150 officers and men will be needed.

Her armament is exceptionally powerful. On deck she will mount, probably in armoured turrets, four 5.5in guns firing an 88lb shell, besides some smaller guns for anti-aircraft work. She is fitted with 14 torpedo tubes, of which eight are in the bows, two at the stern, and four on the broadside. Space is provided for the stowage of 30 torpedoes of the newest and most destructive model. Most of the deck showing above water is armoured against shells and aircraft bombs.

SUBMERGED SEAPLANE.

Included in the equipment is a small seaplane, housed in a watertight tubular hangar on deck.

In the following table Surcouf is compared with the British X 1 and the American V 4, and also with the British light cruiser Comus:

	Surcouf.	X 1.	V 4.	Comus.
Length, feet ...	400	359	381	420
Displacement, tons—				
Surface	3,257	2,325	2,800	3,750
Submerged ...	4,304	3,600	3,750	—
Speed, knots ...	19	19½	17	29
Armament, guns ...	4-5.5in.	4-5.2in.	1-6in.	4-6in.
,, torpedo tubes	14	6	4	4
Complement	150	110	—	348

As will be observed, the new French submarine, when in submerged condition, has a displacement 554 tons greater than that of the cruiser Comus.

Surcouf has been built under the 1926 programme. It was originally intended to lay down a sister vessel, but the latter has been cancelled, owing, it is understood, to the enormous cost of the type.

Owing to her great size, she will be difficult to manœuvre under water. Her true sphere of activity is on the high seas, where she should prove a dangerous opponent to anything less than a heavily armed cruiser.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

Daily Telegraph
25 - 1 - 29

France 6
Navy

THE DAILY TE

FRENCH NAVAL PROJECT.

REPLY TO GERMAN "COUP."

NEW BATTLE CRUISERS.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH learns that the French Naval Staff is to ask for the building of battle-cruisers of a new type.

The type recommended is of 18,000 to 20,000 tons, with a speed of 32 knots, and a main armament of 8-12in guns of a special quick-loading type. This is the first visible reaction to the German coup in producing "pocket battleships."

THE NEW FACTOR.

"NAVY NOW POWERLESS."

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH Naval Correspondent writes:

Since 1914 no heavy warships have been constructed in France, where the post-war fleet consists in the main of fast cruisers, torpedo craft, and submarines. But the advent of Germany's motor-driven "pocket battleships" has introduced an unforeseen factor into the situation, and French experts point out that their navy, as at present constituted, would be utterly powerless to cope with ships of this type.

General Groener's secret memorandum on the Ersatz Preussen and its functions has made a profound impression at the Paris Ministry of Marine. Special significance is attached to the German Defence Minister's admission that the Ersatz Preussen could destroy any ordinary 10,000-ton cruiser with ease and impunity, and to his broad hint that the completion of her "pocket battleships" will enable Germany to dominate the Baltic—a maritime area in which France, owing to her Polish commitments, considers herself to be vitally interested.

The new cruisers would be modern versions of the British Invincible class, the original battle cruisers. They would be superior in all respects save radius of action to the German armoured ships, and would certainly be of infinitely greater value to France than her present Dreadnoughts, which are obsolete in speed and general design.

Under Washington Treaty rules France is already at liberty to construct 70,000 tons of capital ships, and in 1931 she will be free to add a further 35,000 tons. There is, consequently, an ample margin for the construction of the new 20,000-ton battle cruisers. Should M. Georges Leygues, the energetic Minister of Marine, endorse the decision of the Conseil Superieur de la Marine, the Chamber will probably be asked to sanction the laying-down of the first unit of the class in the next financial year.

The German production promises to stultify the regulations of the Washington Treaty. These bind the signatory Powers—with the exception of France and Italy—to construct nothing between 10,000-ton cruisers armed with 8in guns and 35,000-ton battleships. As the Ersatz Preussen mounts six 11in guns and is stoutly armoured, she could blow any cruiser with 8in guns out of the water. It seems inevitable, therefore, that the German type of ship will upset the balance of power which the Treaty was designed to stabilise.

Vo
10.4.29

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

Manchester Guardian
28.12.25

FRANCE 5

NAVY

FRENCH NAVAL PROGRAMME.

Renewal of Battleships.

URGENCY IN CRUISER BUILDING.

(From our own Correspondent.)

PARIS, THURSDAY.

This afternoon the Government's Naval Programme Bill determining the future and permanent composition of the fleet came under the consideration of the Chamber. Simultaneously with the bill there was presented the report of M. Pierre Appell, the deputy for Cherbourg, the Reporter of the Naval Commission. The French fleet, as permanently established by the Navy Law, will consist of (1) 175,000 tons (Washington figure) of battleships and battle cruisers; (2) 360,000 tons of cruisers, destroyers, and scouts; (3) 96,000 tons of submarines; (4) 60,000 tons of aeroplane-carriers. This total does not include auxiliary ships of all kinds, such as minelayers, oil tankers, &c.

It is stipulated by the Navy Law that this programme should be completed at the latest by 1943, and if possible earlier. A life of twenty years is stipulated for ships for the line. For 10,000-ton cruisers it will be 17 years, for destroyers 15 years, and for submarines 12 years. In his report M. Pierre Appell points out that as things stand France is bound by the Treaty of Washington to restrict her big units to a total tonnage of 175,000. At present France has nine battleships, representing a total above that of Washington—namely, 197,000 tons,—but they are mainly old ships, of which three belonging to the Danton class will have to be superannuated in a year or two.

A European Standard.

Are new battleships to be laid to

[illegible] "Yes," replies M. [illegible] sound again. All this was a demonstration of the properties of very short sound waves from a high-pitched note, some sounds being produced by using a telephone operated by a valve.

£6,000 NEEDED IN THREE DAYS.

Hospital's Urgent Appeal.

The Marquis of Northampton, the chairman of the Royal Northern Hospital, Holloway, announces, with reference to the offer of £35,000 for the provision of a special block of private pay beds on condition that an equal sum is raised by the end of the year for the hospital's most pressing needs, that a total of £28,700 has been raised to date, leaving £6,300 still to be raised during the remaining days

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9.II.26

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WESTERN EUROPE.

CONFIDENTIAL.

December 6, 1928.

SECTION 1.

[W 11528/11435/17]

No. 1.

Sir W. Tyrrell to Sir Austen Chamberlain.—(*Received December* 6.)

(No. 2020.)

Paris, December 4, 1928.

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to transmit to you herewith an extract from the "Temps" of the 2nd December,* recording the examination of the 30th November by the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Chamber of Deputies of M. Georges Leygues, the Minister for Marine.

2. M. Leygues's explanations were, like those recently given by the Minister for War to the Chamber Foreign Affairs Commission (see my despatch No. 1976 of the 26th November), mainly and successfully devoted to proving the criminal inaccuracy of the statements made respecting the inconsistency of the present military and naval expenditure of the French Government with the foreign policy expounded at Geneva, and particularly in the Disarmament Commission.

I have, &c.

W. TYRRELL.

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* Not printed.

[671 f—1]

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

The Sydney Morning Herald
27.2.28.

3

FRANCE

NAVY

FRANCE'S GIANT SUBMARINE.

LONDON, Feb. 25.

A message from Paris states that France's super submarine, which is chiefly for the protection of Colonial routes, has been launched at Cherbourg. Three-hundred feet in length it has ten torpedo tubes, and carries thirty-two torpedoes. In addition there is a surface gun, and anti-aircraft gun, and a number of machine-guns. The vessel carries a crew of fifty, and can remain at sea for two months without refuelling. The submarine has a radius of 8000 miles, and a speed of 17.7 knots. A sister ship is now being completed.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

Daily Telegraph 6.1.28.

26

FRANCE

NAVY

RENAISSANCE OF FRENCH SEA POWER.

THE NEW NAVY.

GREAT BUILDING PROGRAMME

SUBMARINE STRENGTH.

By HECTOR C. BYWATER.

[The rehabilitation of the French Navy, based upon the long-term building programme introduced by the Minister of Marine seven years ago, is dealt with in this article by Our Naval Correspondent, who emphasises the remarkable steadiness, rapidity, and efficiency with which construction has been carried out.]

The renaissance of French naval power, which formed the subject of a striking New Year's address by the Minister of Marine, may already be termed an accomplished fact. M. Georges Leygues has reason to be proud of the progress that has been made to date, since it is due entirely to the far-sighted and statesmanlike policy of construction which he himself induced the Chambers to adopt just seven years ago. At that time the French navy was in a parlous state. Its war losses had been very severe, and as the dockyards throughout the period of hostilities were too busily engaged on army contracts to undertake any important naval construction, nothing could be done to fill the gaps in the fleet. Consequently, the return of peace found the French navy with scarcely any modern material. Its remaining battleships and cruisers were obsolescent, and all save a score of its destroyers and submarines were of pre-war design. France had therefore declined appreciably in the scale of relative strength, the process being accentuated by the corresponding rise of other navies.

In 1919 she was barely superior to Italy. She was certainly in no position to defend her vital sea routes, even those in the Mediterranean. Yet her maritime responsibilities had never been greater. Not only had her colonial empire undergone expansion, but the necessity of relying upon her African dominions as a reservoir of man-power in a future crisis made the army, for the first time, directly dependent upon oversea communications. This, no doubt, was the novel factor that determined France to rehabilitate her navy.

RAPID SHIPBUILDING.

It was in January, 1920, that M. Leygues, as Minister of Marine, introduced his long-term building programme, which subsequent amendments have left unchanged in substance. It provided for the construction of 128 vessels, aggregating 300,000 tons, and classified as follows: Nine cruisers, 21 flotilla leaders, 36 destroyers, 55 submarines, two aircraft carriers, and five auxiliary ships, all of which were to be ready by 1932. This great programme is being carried out, on the whole, with remarkable steadiness and punctuality. Ships have been built with a rapidity unprecedented in France—for example, a 10,000-ton cruiser was launched exactly a year after the keel plates had been laid—and the principle of standardisation has been widely employed. No longer is the French Navy "une flotte des echantillons." Large groups of cruisers, destroyers, and submarines are being built in each case to a common design, so much so that when Admiral Pirot's squadron visited Spithead last June, British naval experts were hard put to it to distinguish the flagship Lamotte-Picquet from the Duguay-Trouin, while the flotilla leaders and destroyers baffled identification as units. All the eight vessels of the squadron elicited the warm admiration of our naval officers. They were well planned, strongly built craft, obviously designed to face any weather, to steam fast and far, and to fight hard. The torpedo vessels were more heavily armed than their opposite numbers " in the British Navy.

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French Navy " une flotte des échantillons." Large groups of cruisers, destroyers, and submarines are being built on each case to a common design, so much so that when Admiral Pirot's squadron visited Spithead last June, British naval experts were hard put to it to distinguish the flagship Lamotte-Picquet from the Duguay-Trouin, while the flotilla leaders and destroyers baffled identification as units. All the eight vessels of the squadron elicited the warm admiration of our naval officers. They were well planned, strongly built craft, obviously designed to face any weather, to steam fast and far, and to fight hard. The torpedo vessels were larger and more heavily armed than their " opposite numbers " in the British Navy.

During the past year, as M. Leygues has announced, twenty-five French warships, including submarines, were commissioned, twenty-four were laid down, and funds were voted for starting nineteen others. Of the nine cruisers in the programme, three of 8,000 tons are already in service, four of 10,000 tons are being built or completed, and two of 10,000 tons are to be laid down in the near future. The twenty-one flotilla leaders, of 2,400 to 2,700 tons, are, in effect, small cruisers of immense speed and powerful armament, well adapted to the requirements of Mediterranean strategy. The thirty-six destroyers are modified versions of these big leaders. Most of the submarines are ocean-going boats with a great radius of action, while two are veritable " croiseurs-sous-marins," of 3,000 tons each, these being the largest undersea vessels yet begun for any navy. In addition to the fifty-five submarines included in the naval programme the Coast Defence Estimates contain provision for thirty-six smaller boats.

SWIFT BATTLE-CRUISERS.

It is now the custom to despatch every newly-completed French warship on a long cruise, in order to test its seaworthiness and familiarise the officers and men with their ship. Apart from their value as a means of " showing the flag " in distant ports, these voyages have demonstrated the excellent sea-keeping qualities of the new ships, including the submarines. They have cruised in the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, the North Sea, and the Baltic in all weathers, and not once has any serious failure of structure or machinery been notified.

French naval opinion has turned against the capital ship, which is regarded as unsuitable for operations in narrow seas. France has, therefore, not made use of the capital tonnage allotted to her under the Washington Treaty, neither replacing the battleship France, which was wrecked in 1922, nor laying down the 35,000-ton ship which she was entitled to begin last year. On the other hand, at the Washington Conference she reserved the right to utilise her tonnage allotment as she thought best, and a note to this effect was inserted in the Treaty. Since then plans have been drafted for a type of small battle cruiser, displacing 17,500 tons, of high speed, and armed with 12in. guns. By substituting such vessels for the standard Treaty ship of 35,000 tons, France would be able to maintain in future a fleet of ten capital ships without exceeding her Treaty quota of tonnage. So far, however, no steps have been taken to resume the building of capital ships. Nevertheless, the fact that her six existing Dreadnoughts are not only maintained in full commission, but have been extensively modernised, indicates that the great ship still has a rôle in French naval tactics.

FLEET TRAINING.

Fleet training is now conducted on a much more intensive scale than before the war. Apart from the oversea cruises referred to, squadrons are almost continuously exercising in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, frequently in co-operation with aircraft. Marked attention is paid to gunnery, torpedo practice, and minelaying. The French navy now claims to possess the most effective gun projectiles, the most powerful torpedoes, and the most formidable submarine mines.

While the officers are second to none in professional knowledge and devotion, the efficiency of the lower deck suffers by reason of the short-service system. Moreover, recent events have disclosed the presence of undesirable elements whose activities tend to subvert discipline. In the mass, however, the French bluejackets are competent and patriotic seamen. This is particularly true of the Bretons, who predominate on the lower deck.

Already the French navy occupies a commanding position in the Mediterranean. A few years hence, when the building programme has further matured, French sea power will have regained most, if not all, of its traditional importance as a factor in international affairs.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

Times 2.1.28.

9

FRANCE

NAVY

FRENCH NAVAL PROGRESS.

EXPANSION IN 1927.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

PARIS, JAN. 3.

The year 1927 was a decisive period in the history of the naval revival in France. In that year 25 ships (including submarines) were commissioned, 24 were laid down, and credits were voted for 19 others. Three new air squadrons were also created. By January 1 last 37 post-War units were in service, 14 were undergoing trials, and 48 were building. These figures represent 42 per cent. of the existing post-War programme. The expansion which has been going on may be udged by the fact that while the cost of new construction in 1924 was estimated at 360,000,000 francs, that for 1928 amounts to 1,341,000,000.

By the year 1932 the first two complete series of post-War ships should be ready for service. These include nine cruisers, 21 large destroyers or flotilla leaders, 36 smaller destroyers, 48 submarines, and a great number of auxiliaries, such as aircraft carriers, oil tankers, depôt ships, and dispatch boats. For the last six years the system of construction in series has permitted the regular laying down of an annual average of 25,000 tons, composed of one cruiser, three flotilla leaders, and four destroyers. The average rate of submarine construction has been 9,000 tons a year. This system has enabled large economies to be made both in cost and in the time occupied in building.

The reconstitution of the fleet is therefore well under way. Less progress has been made with auxiliary services, such as the fleet air arm, coast defence, oil storage, submarine stations, and the equipment of naval bases. Both Toulon and Brest are in need of development, and the fact that the new units depend for their mobility upon oil imported from abroad has created a serious storage problem. It is estimated that a supply of oil sufficient for nine months is the necessary minimum; in order to secure this within the next ten years storage for 1,500,000 tons of fuel oil and 127,000 tons of petrol must be created. At present only 180,000 tons of oil and 18,700 tons of petrol can be stored. In carrying out this programme an expenditure of at least 50,000,000f. per annum will be involved; provision exists at present for 28,000,000f. per annum.

Similarly, it is estimated that 50 air squadrons for coast defence and reconnaissance will be required by 1938; there are now 18 such squadrons, which will have to be added to at the average rate of three per annum. But only one new squadron is provided for this year, as the formation of new units has been delayed by the necessity of creating stocks of aircraft for replacement.

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CONFIDENTIAL.

July 15, 1935.

SECTION 2.

(A 6246/22/45)

Sir. G. Clerk to Sir Samuel Hoare. - (Received July 15.)
(No. 1005.)

HIS Majesty's representative at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him copy of despatch No. 10 from His Majesty's naval attache at this Embassy, dated the 11th July, 1935, respecting the effect of the German naval programme on French power at sea.

Paris, July 12, 1935.

ENCLOSURE.

Captain Hammill to Sir G. Clerk.

(No. 10/35.) Paris, July 11, 1935.

Sir,

THE publication of the German programme of naval construction on the 9th July makes it possible to form some estimate of the effect of the resurrection of the navy on French power at sea.

2. It is unprofitable to try and strike an exact balance in figures of the relative strengths in each category. A moderate superiority in numbers will not give any fleet freedom of action in enemy waters. It is, however, possible to forecast (or guess at) the situation in a few years' time when Germany possesses a fleet as opposed to "a few ships," which has been the case since 1919.

3. Put as shortly as possible, the effects seem to be;-

(a) The continuance of the Franco-Italian entente will become increasingly important for France at sea.

(b) In the event of war between France and Germany, (excluding England), France will not be able to bre beat the German fleet within the area of the North Sea. On the other hand, the German fleet as increased should still be unable to do more than irritate the French in the Atlantic.

(c) Whatever may have been the reasons for the French starting the new 35,000-ton battleships, and wh may have been their hopes of cancelling them, ships will now have to be constructed (though directed against Germany they might seem unne large). The reason for the above is that the German battleships will completely outclass renovated Bretagne class.

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(d) The forecast of a German aircraft carrier which will be considerably more efficient than the Bearn will probably mean that the French will have to build one, too.

(e) The French would oppose the abolition of submarines to the last ditch.

4. With the exception of (d), it seems unlikely that France will have to incur additional expenditure on any considerabl scale. The fact that it is at least conceivable that M. Pietri may sometimes be Minister for Finance should mean that the question of cost will be given due weight, in addition to his known sense of public responsibility. If extra money is required, the way in which he is bringing the navy before the public, as exemplified by the naval review at Brest, should be good propaganda for his needs.

5. The reception of the German programme by the French press is at present rather indefinite, and they seem to be casting about for a lead. There are the numerical comparisons which might be expected, but comment seems to be uninstructed, and to take it for granted that the British Admiralty were unaware at the time of the pact of the German state of preparedness. There is still some dwelling on the enormity of our having condoned a breach of the Versailles Treaty, but so far there is nothing constructive, and only vague speculation that the French navy will need to be strengthened.

6. Apart from the press, I have the impression that responsible naval opinion has drifted to the conclusion that a limited German navy is better than an unlimited one.

I have, &c.

C. F. HAMMILL, R.N.,

Naval Attache.

National Archives of Australia NAA: A981, FRA 45

COPY:MT

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

No1 410

Downing Street,

13th November, 1935.

Sir,

With reference to my despatch No.33 of the 21st January, 1935, I have the honour to transmit the accompanying copy of a note from the French Ambassador forwarding, in accordance with the provisions of Section 1(b), Part 3 of Chapter II of the Washington Naval Treaty, the particulars of a battleship not yet named, the construction of which has been decided on.

29th October.

2. This despatch is being sent to the Commonwealth of Australia No.410 and New Zealand No.359.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient,

humble servant,

(Signed) J. H. THOMAS.

THE PRIME MINISTER OF
THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

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